

Tales By A River-Rat



And Other Stuff

by Woodrow W. Geery

FOREWORD

This is a compilation of essays that, for the most part, were published in the Knoxville, Iowa *Journal-Express*. "A Gopher Economy" was published in the *Good Old Days* magazine. "A Depression Morning" appeared in the *Des Moines Register*.

I have had the experience of growing up and living in an era of great change and world-shaking events, and in periods of plenty and known the deprivations of the Great Depression. Growing up in a small town was a rich and varied experience for me. Today, youngsters complain of boredom. Seldom, if ever, did I experience boredom growing up in Harvey. There were simply too many things to do and we never felt the need for someone to provide us with diversions. The times drew people in small towns together as they shared one another's pain, sickness, tragedy, crisis and joy.

Motivation for writing these pieces comes, perhaps, from a desire to record a bit of history relating to my youth when the world around us did not move so fast and life was much more simple. Our way of life has changed dramatically in my time, especially in the fields of communications, transportation, entertainment and health care. Yet, there are days when I yearn for some aspects of the good old days.

During my lifetime there have been many wars and threats of war, and I have had the unforgettable experience of engaging in and surviving combat as an infantryman in the Pacific in World War II. It was an experience that left memories and images of misery and horror indelibly fixed in my mind.

I am grateful to those who have taken the time to tell me how they have related to and enjoyed my stories and to my wife, Florence, whose support has been invaluable.



Daughter Ann Claire –
Florence – Daughter Laurie
Sue. Three lovelies strolling a
St. Louis boulevard.

IN DEDICATION

I dedicate this collection of essays to the memory of my parents, Arch and Ethel Geery. Both suffered the loss of their fathers at a very early age. As a result, they both had a very unstable home life. They received very little formal education or opportunity for social and recreational activities. In their marriage, their love of family, determination, strength of body and character and natural talents maintained our family unity through the heartache of the terminal illness of an 11-year-old son amidst the hardships and deprivations of the Great Depression.



Arch and Ethel Geery

About me - I was born December 11, 1916, at Harvey, Iowa, son of staunch Democrats; thus, the name Woodrow Wilson. At the age of 16, I graduated from Harvey High School. In high school I participated in basketball and baseball. The country was in the midst of the Great Depression when I graduated in 1933 and work was practically non-existent. Over the years, I worked in the coal mines, at the brickyard, on the railroads, at Rolscreen, CCC Camp, for farmers and peddled fish.

I played basketball and baseball on the Harvey semi-pro teams. After my playing days, I officiated college, high school and semi-pro baseball, basketball and softball. In the summer of 1935, my cousin Orbra and I rode the freight train to Montana where we worked at an Indian CCC Camp.

I was drafted into the army infantry in March 1945 and spent three years overseas. I was awarded three Campaign Stars, the Bronze Star and the Combat Infantry Badge and was discharged September 30, 1945 after 4 years and 7 months of service. I started working at the Knoxville Veterans Hospital in November 1945 and retired in May 1972.

Tales and Other Stuff



Harvey High School and Gymnasium. Author was born in the white house by the sidewalk.

Tales and Other Stuff

	Page
Treasures of the Mind	5
Rites of Spring	7
Harvey's Famous Visitors	9
Going Barefoot	11
A Hair on the Magpost	13
Danger on the Slopes	18
Move County Seat to Harvey	20
The Lost Toy - A Christmas Story	22
Taws Fats and Screw Bony Tight	24
A Pair of Shoes	26
A Depression Christmas	28
Bussey Memories	30
The Wrestling Match	32
The Hottest Show in Town	34
Miami Vice, Harvey Style	36
Nightmare in Moulton	38
The East St. Louis Incident	40
The Mark of the Gin Horse	42
A Three-legged Stove and Other Perils	44
The Harvey Oasis	46
Oh Those Kentucky Wonders	48
A Gopher Economy	50
Tale of a Transient	52
The Golden Age of Radio	54
Oh What A Time	56
Island Living - The Bridge	58
The Cultivator Jockey	60
Spring on the Island	62
Depression Economics	64
The CCC	66
The Infernal Machine	68
A 1930's Saturday Night in Knoxville	70
Depression Diversions	72
The Winter of 1936	74
A Day in the Cut	76
A Depression Morning	78
Down on the Levee	81
Old Jerz	83

Treasures of the Mind

A few weeks ago, I attended the Harvey Homecoming celebration. I walked the one block from the city park to the old schoolhouse, which is being restored for a museum, and past the house where I was born.

The words of the English poet, Alexander Pope, concerning memories, came to me as I walked over a sidewalk I had traversed hundreds of times: "Lulled in the countless chambers of the brain, our thoughts are linked by many a hidden chain, awake but one, and lo, what myriads rise! Each stamps its image as the other flies!"

How true! Like a fast-moving slide show, images and memories flitted in and out of my brain with almost every step.

There was the vacant lot where a thicket of willows and horse weeds grew. There Clyde Redding, Eddie Moore and I would rendezvous to smoke cigarettes fashioned from materials smuggled from our homes. When my mother discovered us puffing away, she escorted me home, took off my britches, laid me across her lap and with her bare hand applied some psychology to my bare bottom which must have reached my brain, because I have been free of the nicotine habit all of my life. Thanks Mom!

Up the sidewalk I would hurry in the evening to meet a man with a face blackened by coal dust and wearing grimy miner's clothes. I would carry his dinner bucket home knowing I would find in it a tidbit he always managed to leave. A stale crust of bread and a soggy bit of pie had a special taste because that man was special. He was my father.

On the first day of school in 1921, I sat on our porch pensively watching the kids go by. Mrs. Hawk, the first grade teacher, must have sensed my disappointment and told my mother to send me to school even though I was only four. Starting to school at the tender age of four had its pitfalls. I couldn't master the buttons on my knee pants and shirt outfit. The pants had no fly and were buttoned to the shirt. Consequently, I would have to find my sister, Ruth, who helped me with the buttons so I could visit the outside facility. Without her I probably would have been a first grade dropout.

When Grandma Pickens visited us, we kids eagerly awaited her after-supper ritual. Seated in a rocker, she would methodically get out her corncob pipe, crush some of her home-grown, long-green tobacco in her palm, fill her pipe, light it and sit back and puff and rock and talk. We sometimes tittered behind our hands at the sight of Grandma smoking a pipe, but we were soon rendered spellbound by her stories. She told tales of the hardships her family endured as she grew up in the Missouri hills. We listened fearfully as she told of wild animals prowling around their log cabin at night. She talked

sadly of the premature and tragic deaths of her husband and some of her eleven children. I don't recall her complaining much about her lot in life.

There was a neighbor, "Happy Jack" Reynolds, a short, cocky, bowlegged Irishman, reputed to be a deserter from the British Navy. His Irish brogue intrigued us. He was far ahead of his time for each fall he would bank dirt around his house until eventually it resembled the underground houses of today. In and out of my mind the memories flew, far too many to record here.

Occasionally, I hear someone say, "I want to forget the good old days," and Thomas Wolfe wrote, "You can't go home again." However, I tend to agree with the philosopher Thomas Fuller who writes, "Memories are the treasures of the mind." So if you are a little long in the tooth as I am and grow weary of these times of jet planes, high-powered cars, the inanity of television, the IRS, the political hypocrisy and the frantic pursuit of people for the good life, kick off your shoes and lean back in your favorite chair (a rocker if you have one). Close your eyes and listen to the creaking as you rock, and in this peacefulness, search the "treasures of your mind" and you can go home again.



Grandma Pickens enjoying her rocker and pipe.

Rites of Spring

It was morning on April 28. The sign on the bank blinked a cold 34 degrees and a chilly wind swirled around the Knoxville square. "What has happened to the weather?" grouched one of the coffee drinkers in the bakery. "It's either too hot or too cold. What has happened to spring?"

This started a discussion that blamed the erratic weather on everything from the atom bomb and the CIA to the warm ocean current called El Nino. All of the old timers seemed to agree that springs just weren't the same.

Spring, in the 1920s and 30s, was that period of time between a bitter Iowa winter and a scorching Iowa summer. It was that time when people in small town Iowa emerged from the winter doldrums to enjoy warm sunshine and balmy breezes and to perform those rites of spring that were as predictable as the greening of the grass.

Unlike today, greens and fresh vegetables could not be bought at the grocery store. Consequently, folks were out early to gather the tender dandelions and other greens to bolster their vitamin deficient diets. Mushroom hunters furtively returned to their secret spots hoping to go undetected as they plucked the delicious morels. Marble shooters gathered in the alley between the post office and the show hall to renew their quest for the reputation as the top marble shooter in town.

Farmers began breaking and raking cornstalks. I remember the farmers on the island breaking the stalks with a section of railroad rail pulled by horses. The cornstalks were windrowed and burned at night. Flames and smoke filled the sky with an eerie glow.

Steel traps were brought out of storage and young trappers matched wits with the wily pocket gopher. Farmers welcomed the trappers and the county paid 10 cents for each pair of gopher front feet.

Kites, fashioned from banana crate wood and newspaper, appeared in the sky over town.

Fishermen of all ages could be seen heading for the many good fishing spots around Harvey. A hook on a length of line attached to a willow pole cut at the fishing hole constituted the fishing gear of many of the fishermen. A cane pole was a luxury and a rod and reel a rarity. One of my fondest memories is of my Dad and I fishing in English Creek near Tom Harvey's swinging bridge where pan fish could be caught from the clear, deep pools of water. The pools are now filled with silt that chokes the once idyllic stream.

Baseball paraphernalia was taken from the closet and baseball players and would-be baseball players played catch in the street or vacant lot.

One rite looked forward to by the school kids was the annual trek to one

of the woods near Harvey to pick wild flowers for their newly completed May baskets. Girls' shrieks would pierce the air when some ornery boy would yell, "Snake!"

Another ritual, eagerly anticipated by most everyone, was the removal and storing of the bulky, baggy "long-handled" underwear. Some girls, forced to wear long underwear, would roll the legs up above their knees on the way to school and roll them down on the way home.

Heating stoves were taken down and stored and the living room seemed to double in size. Outward signs of spring housecleaning were the carpets and rugs hanging on the clothes line and someone whacking them with a carpet beater.

Case Messmaker and Morg Bryant turned from hauling coal with their team and wagon to plowing gardens for anxious gardeners waiting to get some seeds in the ground. At night, mixed groups of young people divided into teams, engaged in a sort of a hide- n-seek game we called "whistle or holler." Corny? I suppose so compared to today's diversions for young folks. It was great fun, even without a joint, a snort or crack.

The arrival of spring was the signal for the local "honey dipper," with his dilapidated old truck, to begin the very necessary ritual of cleaning the out-houses. Like the Maytag repairman, his was a lonely job, but for different reasons. Some people insisted that he do their job only after dark. Now he would probably be called a "waste removal engineer" or some other mis-speak name.

Are springs less "springy" than they used to be? Many oldsters think so. I suspect, however, that our reasoning is clouded somewhat because we are remembering the springs of our youth.

* * * * *

BACKHOUSEBIT – In his poem, "The Passing of the Backhouse," the great poet, James Whitcomb Riley, stirs the memories of those who grew up using that facility. Although Riley called it a backhouse, it was also known as the privy, toilet, can, and other more descriptive names. Occasionally, Dad would call it the 'donicker.' I never asked him about his use of the word. After his death, I became curious about the basis and origin of the word but my research failed to enlighten me. While attending the World's Fair in Knoxville, Tennessee, I was viewing the setup of a large circus in miniature and there in the exhibit was a miniature back-house with the word 'donicker' printed on the door. There was the answer to my curiosity! As a young man, Dad had worked as a roustabout with a large circus!

Harvey's Famous Visitors

Being a history buff, I have for years been intrigued by the information found in small town histories and other local and state publications. The complete and fascinating story of Kelly's Army in Iowa appeared in the June 1971 issue of *The Palimpsest*, a publication of the Iowa Historical Society. Following is only a brief summary of the event.

The Panic of 1893 created massive unemployment and hardships in the United States. In the spring of 1894, some 1,500 unemployed San Francisco laborers and tradesmen, hoping to make their plight known to the nation's lawmakers and to petition for relief, set out for Washington, D.C.

Organized into a quasi-military unit under the command of General Charles Kelly, the army became known as Kelly's Industrial Army. Kelly hoped to reach Washington by May 1 and join with Coxey's Commonwealth Army of Christ for a great May Day parade and rally. Freight trains carried Kelly's Army to Council Bluffs but refused to haul them on to Chicago. The group was forced to walk from Council Bluffs to Des Moines aided by food, supplies and wagons furnished by sympathizers along the way. Large crowds lined the road to witness this phenomenon. Feeding the army required an estimated 1000 loaves of bread, 1000 pounds of meat and 50 pounds of coffee daily.

In Des Moines, 150 boats measuring 18 feet by six feet and one foot deep that would hold 13 men, were constructed and the army began an incredible journey down the Des Moines River to the Mississippi. Along the way, thousands of people gathered on the riverbanks to witness the spectacle and provide supplies. After reaching the Mississippi and proceeding toward St. Louis, the army slowly melted away and only a small number reached Washington, D.C. long after Coxey's May Day appearance.

A member of Kelly's Army was young Jack London who later became a famous author. He recorded the journey in his diary and wrote of spending the night of May 11, 1894 on the bank of the Des Moines River near Harvey.

According to a story written by Justin Haege and found in the Fairfield, Calif., library by Cleo "Bud" Bennett, Jessie James made an ill-fated visit to Harvey sometime in the late 1800s. After making camp on the Des Moines River north of Harvey, Jessie and Jim Sterling rode into Harvey to buy supplies at the small store there. The next morning Jim Sterling fell from his horse and was trampled to death. As his men buried Sterling, Jessie proceeded to purloin two chickens from a nearby field. The owner of the chickens, Paul Holdsworth's great-grandfather, William McLaughlin, took a dim view of Jessie's actions and shot him in the leg. Jessie would not forget his

visit to Harvey because he not only lost his best friend, but the wound in his leg failed to completely heal.

The Harvey Centennial Book records the story of a young automobile salesman from Des Moines who visited the Maddys in 1911. He sold them a new car and then stayed on for two days to teach Mr. Maddy how to drive it. The salesman was young Eddie Rickenbacker, who went on to become a famous race car driver, a WWI flying ace and earned high honors for his service in WWII. In the mid-twenties, he started his own automobile company which manufactured the Rickenbacker—the first car to have four-wheel brakes. Lloyd Crispin, a Harvey resident, owned a Rickenbacker. I remember its insignia being the “Hat-in-the-Ring” which was the insignia on the planes in Rickenbacker’s “Hat-in-the-Ring” squadron in WWI.

History, like gold, is where you find it.



Jack London's diary indicates that on May 11, 1894, Kelly's Industrial army camped near Harvey.

Going Barefoot

They call them sneakers now and some brands sell for as much as \$175.00 a pair. That's what it said right there in the newspaper! We called them tennis shoes when I was a youngster except when we wore them to play basketball, then we called them basketball shoes. I don't remember anyone in Harvey playing tennis but we called them tennis shoes anyway. The newspaper also reported that in some of the larger cities, teenagers were killing each other for the sneakers which are considered a status symbol. I'm sure that no one would have wanted to bump me off for my \$1.98 basketball shoes, especially near the end of the season when both of my little toes peeked out of the sides and the soles were worn thin from playing on a cement floor.

When the warm winds of spring melted the snow and warmed the earth, we could hardly wait to take off our shoes and go barefoot. There was competition to be the first one to show up at school without shoes on. Usually our winter shoes were in pretty sorry shape by spring. Having two pairs of shoes was a luxury. Shoes with holes in the soles were worn with a piece of cardboard inside the shoes until a cheap pair of glue-on soles could be bought. If a skate pulled the sole of our shoe loose, we walked to the shoe cobbler with a fruit jar rubber holding the loose sole in place. Usually, the cobbler could repair the shoe while we waited. So it was with a feeling of freedom that we rid ourselves of our shoes for the summer.

"Blessing on thee little man, barefoot boy with cheeks of tan," so goes the old poem. One had to be blest to get through the summer without suffering painful cuts, abrasions and puncture wounds. Going barefoot was downright hazardous! Even though the soles of our feet became tough and calloused, they were no match for the ever present sandburs and cockleburs that grew in abundance on the island where we lived. They had fierce little stickers on them. We walked up the Rock Island track to get to town. We stubbed our toes on the cross ties, walked on abrasive cinders and tried to dodge the creosote that oozed from the ties on hot days, but were not always successful.

Jagged pieces of broken glass, lurking in weed patches we ran through, inflicted many nasty wounds. Stepping on a rusty nail sticking up through a discarded board not only resulted in a painful puncture wound but also raised the specter of lockjaw. My mother always treated those puncture wounds with a piece of bacon fat held in place on the wound by a bandage made from flour or sugar sacking. One evening, while slopping hogs, I became angry and vented my anger on one of the hogs. As I launched a kick

at the hog, it threw up its head and its tusk punctured my big toe. The excruciating, burning pain was so intense I almost peed in my pants. There were many sources of danger that inflicted wounds on bare feet from stepping on an upturned garden rake, to getting speared by a large locust tree thorn.

Without a doubt, the most disheartening mishap to experience while going barefoot was to be running across a pasture and step in a fresh cow pie far from a creek or source of water.

As a sixteen-year-old I was playing outfield for Harvey in a semi-pro baseball game with Knoxville. Having no baseball spikes, I wore my brother's track spikes. The first time up, I tried to beat out a slow roller to short. As I crossed first base, I felt my spikes hit Reese Kading's leg. I returned to first in a state of panic thinking my pointed track spikes had surely inflicted severe damage to Reese's leg. Much to my relief, my spikes had shredded his sock but had not broken the skin on his leg. I finished the game barefooted.



L to R: Fred, Don and Woody Geery decked out in patched clothing and barefoot, head for school. The patched clothing was a necessity and not a style.

A Hair on the Mag-post

Unlike the passenger pigeon, the Model T will not become an extinct species. It will survive because it is a collector's bonanza and a prime museum piece. However, I do fear that much of the unique and anecdotal lore surrounding it will be lost as those who grew up with it during its heyday depart the scene. Although it rhymes with E.T. and Mr. T. it is not a TV show or a movie, it is a car.

Affectionately called the "Tin Lizzie," the Model T was the first mass-produced automobile using the assembly line method of production developed by Henry Ford. Assembly line workers were paid the unheard of wage of \$5.00 a day, and in 1921, nearly one million Model Ts rolled off the assembly line.

"You can have any color you want," said Mr. Ford, "as long as it's black!" There was little variety in models. Ford was a relentless force against high car prices, and his innovations drove the price down from a high of \$800 to a low of \$290.

The Model T was unique in many ways and a far cry from the fuel-injected, air-conditioned and computerized luxury cars of today. It was simple to operate and generally reliable. Old timers often said, "You can keep a Model T running with a screwdriver, a pair of pliers, a monkey wrench, some baling wire and a few choice cuss words!" It did have its own temperament though and at times could be balky, stubborn and downright ornery.

We had our first Model T in the early 1920s. High in profile, square and open, it was powered by a 20 H.P. engine. Its gears were controlled by a clutch pedal and a reverse pedal. A brake pedal and an emergency brake lever were used to slow it down and stop it. Underneath the steering wheel, and on either side of the steering column, were finger levers—one for gas control and one for spark control; these were often referred to as "the ears." The gas lever was the accelerator. On the dash was a push and pull rod for adjusting the carburetor choke. Many owners ran a stiff wire from the carburetor out through the radiator so the choke could be controlled from in front of the car.

Starting the Model T motor could be hazardous to your health; it had to be cranked. Cantankerous at times, the motor had a nasty habit of "kicking" during the cranking process if the spark lever was not set just right. Consequently, the cranker was duly warned, "Never curl your thumb around the crank handle!" Many failed to heed this warning and a broken wrist, or a broken thumb, was not an uncommon result. A kick could also jerk the cranker's head down on the four-eared radiator cap resulting in a bruised head, or a black eye or loss of teeth. It could be ornery.

Our Model T for some reason unknown to me, would not start sometimes unless one of the hind wheels was jacked up off the ground. I presume this facilitated the cranking process in some way. One busy Saturday afternoon, the engine died as we waited at the stop sign at the northeast corner of the Knoxville square. After repeated cranking failed, Dad jacked up the hind wheel and cranked while the rest of us stood around feeling and looking embarrassed as grinning motorists went around us.

Being alone and trying to start a Model T tested a person's patience and agility. With the gas lever set, the spark lever set and the choke set, the cranker cranked and the motor started. Great! Don't cheer yet! The cranker must now race around to the driver's side to quickly adjust the gas, the spark, the choke and then throw his right leg over the side and clamber behind the wheel! Leg over the side? Clamber behind the wheel? That's right. There was no door by the driver's seat. Where the door should have been was where the emergency brake lever was located! If a person was lucky, this procedure would only be required once, but often the motor would die, as the adjustments were being made, and the whole process would have to be repeated. If it was icy or muddy underfoot, there was often a slip between the crank and driver's seat. Starting a Model T could be aggravating.

One of our family's yearly excursions in the Model T was a trip to Missouri to visit relatives. After days of planning, we would set off on a trip extended in time by a picnic lunch and frequent rest stops; five kids you know. The shortest route was through Bussey via Tracy. Dad always wanted to go this way even though the inevitable crisis would arise as we neared the Cedar Creek hill southeast of Tracy. Long steep hills were a Model T's nemesis! From the tank underneath the front seat, gravity pulled the gasoline to the carburetor; therefore, only the gasoline in the carburetor was available to negotiate a long steep hill. Even gasoline won't run uphill. If the gasoline in the carburetor ran out before the top of the hill was reached, the engine conked out. As we neared the Cedar Creek hill, much debate went on as to whether or not we could make the hill without the motor stalling.

With jaw set, head thrust forward, corncob pipe clamped between his teeth and hands gripping the steering wheel, Dad poised for the assault. Onto the Cedar Creek bridge we hurtled with both ears pulled down and the motor roaring. Up the hill we sped-then slowed, then crept and then stopped. Even our hunching body English didn't help.

"Out! Out! Everybody out," Dad would shout and we'd all pile out into the road and watch him skillfully back down the hill. The rest of us walked to the top of the hill and waited while he turned the Model T around and backed up the hill.

Why not back up the hill in the first place? Oh, come now! Where is your

spirit of adventure? Besides, if we had made it up the first time, Dad would have had bragging rights among other Model T owners. Wow! Up the Cedar Creek hill head first without stopping! Mom didn't take too kindly to the whole situation.

We all looked forward to trips to Tracy along the river road southeast of Harvey; especially the area where giant cottonwoods and elms shaded our passage and pastoral scenes greeted us on all sides. Our adventurous spirits soared when we passed a glade in the woods, and Mom pointed it out as the spot where the Lew White family camped on the evening of the first leg of their journey to Missouri in a covered wagon. That's right! A covered wagon in the early 1920s, no less.

One such trip to Tracy ground to an abrupt halt when the motor, without warning, died.

"Could be a hair on the mag-post," Dad speculated and we all disembarked. He quickly removed the floorboards and with a monkey wrench unscrewed the mag-post from the flywheel housing. "That's what I thought," he exclaimed as he examined the mag-post, obviously pleased with his accurate diagnosis, "There is a hair on the mag-post!"

He quickly wiped it with his bandanna, screwed it back in, replaced the floorboards and we were soon on our way. A hair on the mag-post? Well, it wasn't a hair exactly; it was fibers from the gear bands. The mag-post normally collected electrical currents from the magnets fastened to the spinning flywheel. Thus, the errant fibers very effectively short-circuited the electrical system. The Model T was a fragile machine at times.

Dinner's over. "Hurry up and wash the dishes!" The spring air is balmy and the sun is bright. Time to take a spin in the Model T. "Let's go to Pershing! We'll see the big coal mine tippie!" No big hills and the roads are dry. Might stop and hunt some mushrooms on the way. What a delightful way to spend a Sunday afternoon. Well...let's see.

The "Tin Lizzie" cooperates and starts easily. The motor purrs as we cruise through the countryside, enjoying the springtime landscape. As we near Pershing, a damper falls on our enthusiasm. Out of the southwest, rain clouds foretell an unwelcome intrusion into our afternoon. The storm develops rapidly and the tour of Pershing is cut short as we head for home. It is evident the storm is going to overtake us, and Mom wants to stop and put on the side curtains that are stored under the rear seat cushion. Dad doesn't want to get caught on muddy roads and besides, we have never used the side curtains and they are tricky to put on even under the best of circumstances. The discussion heats up! It starts to sprinkle and Dad yields. We all get out and the spectacle of the Geery family putting side curtains on for the first time unfolds. The rain comes down harder and the activities resemble a

composite of the Marx Brothers and the Three Stooges in action. At last, they are on but we are all soaking wet. Dad herds the Model T zigging and zagging down the slick, muddy road. The storm passes quickly and the sun comes out with a vengeance. The temperature soars and tempers flare in the closed-in car packed with seven steamy bodies. Mom wants to stop and take the side curtains off. Dad wants to get home before more rain comes. The younger kids whine and the older kids spat. After what seems like ages we arrive home and the Model T disgorges its sodden cargo. What a delightful way to spend a Sunday afternoon in the spring!

Did you know the city of Knoxville was battling noise pollution some 60 years ago? Sure it was! In the early twenties, at the east city limits on old Highway 2, a traffic sign read, "CLOSE CUT-OUT BEFORE ENTERING - VIOLATORS WILL BE FINED." Close a cut-out? The cut-out was a gadget that controlled the engine's exhaust emission. With the cut-out closed, the engine's exhaust went out the tail pipe and was muffled. With the cut-out open, the exhaust roared directly from the exhaust manifold without any reduction of sound. Model T owners maintained their cars ran better and more efficiently with the cut-out open, but the city of Knoxville frowned on the resultant noise. The cut-out was controlled by a small foot pedal on the floor, but it usually broke and was replaced by a piece of baling wire. Perhaps the motor did run more efficiently, but I suspect the owners liked to hear the throaty crackle of that powerful 20 H.P. engine.

When winter winds and sub-zero temperatures came and our Model T sat outside all night, starting it required ingenuity, patience and fortitude. Since we had no anti-freeze, the radiator was drained each night. The crankcase oil was drained and taken into the house and kept warm. In the bitter cold of early morning, a procedure was followed that might, or might not, produce results. The hind wheel was jacked up and the warm oil was poured back into the crankcase. A teakettle of boiling hot water was poured over the intake manifold. No! Not into the radiator. With that completed, the cranking procedure began and if dame fortune smiled, the engine started. Then came the ticklish task of pouring water into the radiator. Pour the water in too fast and it froze in the radiator. Pour it in too slow and the motor heated up. A piece of cardboard or a gunny sack to cover the front of the radiator was a must-sort of a hand-operated thermostat. Too much covering over the radiator and it boiled. Too little covering and it froze. Yes, the Model T could be temperamental.

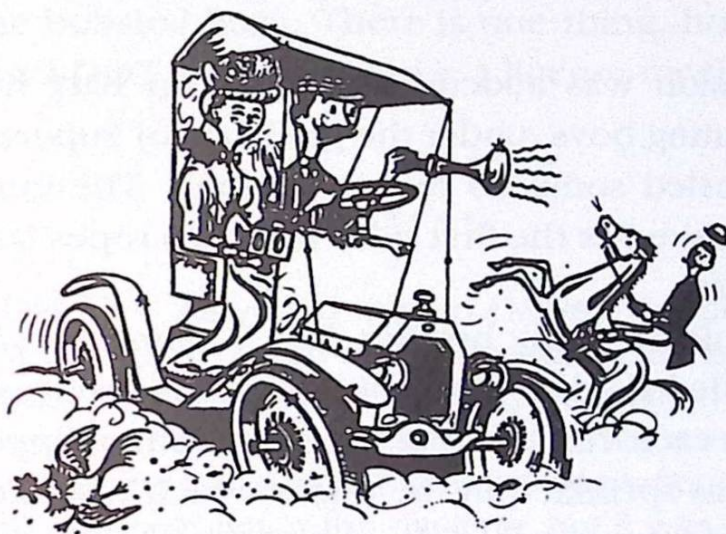
It was a versatile vehicle too. One man removed the lid from the trunk of his coupe and built a wooden box in the trunk space and hauled coal. Bill Rice rigged his Model T so that with the hind wheels off the ground, one wheel drove the corn elevator at harvest time. Dad once hauled a small mine

mule from Tipperary (Tipperary?) to Harvey in the back seat of our Model T with Fred Parker holding on to the mule to keep it from jumping out. At one time, Model T racers kicked up dust on a not-so-fast, half-mile dirt track at Marion County fairs.

Our Model T was called a touring car and had a collapsible top that folded down much like a convertible. Most of the summer the top was "let down" to provide an early form of air-conditioning. One summer we really got sporty and completely removed the top with near dire consequences to my well-being.

As we came up the hill from Dad's coal mine, the car passed under trees with low hanging branches. The older kids would always grab the branches and strip off a handful of leaves as we slowly went up the hill. Thinking it looked like great fun, I stood up on the rear cushion and grabbed two hands full of limbs. Immediately I panicked and forgot to strip the leaves and forgot to let go. As the limb drug me out over the back of the car, I finally did let go and lit squarely on my head in the middle of the road. Unaware of my sudden departure, Dad proceeded up the hill without stopping until my sister Ruth tapped him on the shoulder and calmly informed him, "We've lost Wood."

The dire consequences? My brother, Bud, claims that is why my discourses ramble these days.



Danger on the Slopes

Winter's cold and snow meant one thing to many of the young people in Harvey. They would soon be hitting the slopes and ice that provided excellent conditions for sledding and skating. When sufficient snow had fallen, young folks got out their sleds and headed for one of the many available hills.

Sleds ranged from homemade jobs to the much-envied Flexible Flier. Baty hill, Brickyard hill, Morgan pasture hills and others offered slopes that ranged from simple to exciting to dangerous.

In the memories of most oldsters, Baty hill was synonymous with sledding in Harvey. Rising in the south part of town, it provided a steep, straight descent that carried sledders onto Harvey's Main Street. The Brickyard hill, north of town, provided a steep, thrilling ride to the brickyard area. There was always an element of danger as sledders, unsupervised, sped down the slopes - especially at night.

Seeking additional thrills, a group pioneered a new route down the precipitous north slope of the Brickyard hill. Sledders, demonstrating their bravado, zig-zagged through a stand of trees waiting to bring sledders to a sudden halt.

Thus it was that Tommy Beaver careened down the course, failed to negotiate a turn, crashed headfirst into a waiting tree and was knocked colder than a wedge. The only first-aid rendered by his frightened companions was rubbing snow in his face until he revived. After that, the north slope course was abandoned. Tommy sported a good-sized lump on his head for awhile.

A new dimension was added to sledding on Baty hill when the high school manual training boys, under the guidance of Superintendent McCarty, constructed a bobsled some 10 feet or so long. The guidance system left something to be desired as the first rider held two ropes fastened to the front of the front runners.

Upon the shoulders of my brother, Bud, a powerful young man, fell the job of "chief bobsled guider." The bobsled runners cut two grooves in the packed snow and each run made the course more slippery. On very cold evenings, water was sprinkled in the tracks which resulted in an icy surface and greatly increased the speed of the sled. With eight or 10 people on it, the bobsled would hurtle down the hill at breathtaking and sometimes frightening speed, burst onto Main Street, clink-clank across the C.B. & Q railroad tracks and finally glide to a halt several yards down the street.

The sled didn't start its descent until watchers signalled that there were no cars or trains coming. When sledding was good, people gathered to ride the bobsled, or their own sled, or just to watch.

When it was cold and there was no snow, young folks gathered on English Creek, the sandpit or the old Des Moines River bed to skate. Clamp-on or key skates were the order of the day. No one had shoe skates. Most skaters used belts or hame straps to keep the skates from pulling the soles off their shoes, which was probably the only pair of shoes they owned.

Often a game of "shinny on your own side" would ensue. Played with a tin can and sticks of assorted sizes and shapes, the action would become quite heated and usually ended in fisticuffs when someone failed to "shinny on his own side."

As in sledding, acts of bravado on the ice sometimes ended in someone taking an unwanted dip as skaters vied to see who could skate closest to a patch of open water. Usually, the ever-present bonfire spelled relief for the wet daredevil.

Then there was skating just for the fun of it. John McKenzie and I, after donning our skates at the ford over the old river bed, skated up the river to English Creek and up English Creek to near Flagler, then back to Harvey.

The existence of the big bobsled was of short duration. On a night when the run was extremely fast, the sled became unmanageable. As it neared the bottom of the hill, it jumped out of the grooves, veered into a small embankment and upset, sending bodies sprawling over the area. Mary Howard suffered a severely injured ankle and others received various bruises and lacerations.

Next day the manual training boys chopped the sled to pieces and burned it near the site of the accident. There were mixed emotions as the crowd watched the bobsled burn. There is one thing, however, of which I am certain. The Iowa DOT would not issue a license for the bobsled were it in existence today.

* * * * *

A WATERMELONBIT – As young men in Harvey, we did not participate in drive-by shootings or do drugs, but we did swipe watermelons. We didn't admit to stealin' melons because that connoted something worse than swiping them. Four or five melon patches flourished on the island and we usually visited them a couple of times a year. Doing damage to the patch was taboo! Ironically, the owners would give us all we could eat in the daytime, but it was more daring to visit the patches at night. While driving across the island one day, we stopped to visit with Walt Rice. In the course of our conversation someone asked him, "Walt, how are your watermelons this year?" With a wry smile he replied, "You guys ought to know, you've been in the patch as much as I have."

Move County Seat to Harvey

When folks talk about the small towns in this area that have seen better days, they are prone to blame their predicament on the closing of the coal mines. That is often true, but not in Harvey's situation. In the early part of the century, Harvey flirted with becoming a town of considerable size and importance.

A January 1908 issue of the Bussey Tri-County Press contained an editorial which proposed moving the county seat to Harvey. A joke? No, not at all. The editor made a pretty good case and cited, what he believed to be, valid reasons for the move. Harvey's location, expected growth and potential as a business and industrial center formed the basis for his proposal.

Up to the turn of the century, Harvey was a small town of some 50 inhabitants. Enter Herman Reitveld, a Central College graduate from Pella. Using far-flung advertising, he began a one-man promotion to bring people, business and industry to Harvey. In his efforts, he spent some \$35,000 (a goodly sum in those days) and was known as "the father of modern Harvey—a young man's town."

According to a story in a 1902 issue of the *Des Moines Capital* newspaper, Harvey grew to a population of more than 400 in one year; furthermore, the story stated, "Harvey is one of the few towns in the state destined to double in population and commercial importance in the next six months and have a regular boom for several years."

What motivated Reitveld to undertake this venture? There were several reasons. The transportation needs of any business or industry in Harvey would be well served by the Burlington, Wabash and Rock Island railroads. At that time, railroads were the only means of moving freight long distances. In addition, there were plans for an interurban rail line to run from Waterloo to Chariton and Buxton via Pella, Harvey and Bussey.

In the Harvey vicinity were large deposits of coal, clay, limestone, sand, gravel and abundant water. As a result of Reitveld's campaign, several factories were built including a brickyard, excelsior factory, washing machine factory, cement block plant, bottling plant and of course, coal mines and sand and gravel pits were opened.

Heading the business sector was the large Foshier Brothers' concern which sold a complete line of farm machinery including buggies, windmills, etc. They also operated a mortuary. Their volume of business earned them commendations from their suppliers. The Racine Wagon and Carriage Co. cited them as their leading agent in the entire state of Iowa. The Lyman and March department store rated a story in the *Des Moines Capital* describing

it as a store that “could compete with any of the stores in larger county seat towns.” Some 12 to 15 businesses lined Harvey’s Main Street and it boasted a city band and two physicians. Special trains brought large contingents of labor union groups to Harvey for picnics and holidays in beautiful Bluffmore Park which overlooked the Des Moines River. Harvey was booming.

The cornerstone of Harvey’s expansion was the construction of a million dollar cement plant. Nine hundred acres of land, underlain with limestone, was bought by the Hawkeye Portland Cement Company. The Wabash Railroad built a siding to the plant site and preliminary construction work took place, but the plant was never built. In 1912 the land was auctioned off and Henry Reitveld’s dream of Harvey as an industrial center faded. Any possibility of Knoxville losing the courthouse disappeared.

Harvey’s woes continued on February 1914 when a disastrous fire leveled most of the business district.

The obvious question. Why wasn’t the cement plant built? The reason given the most credence was that one powerful Harvey citizen stopped the project. I like to think there was more intrigue involved. Since Knoxville was threatened with loss of the courthouse, maybe they solicited the aid of an Oliver North. They already had a man named Casey working for them.



A part of Harvey’s flourishing Main Street in the early 1900s.

The Lost Toy - A Christmas Story

Once upon a time there was a little boy who lived in the country with his father, mother, brother and two sisters. It was the Christmas season and the little boy was becoming more excited as Christmas Day drew near. He was only four years old and it would be the first Christmas of his memory.

Each evening, when the other children came home from the little country school, they would tell about the Christmas stories they had read and bring Christmas tree decorations they had made out of red and green construction paper. They would hang their ornaments on the tree and help the little boy make some so he could hang his on the tree.

One Saturday evening the family got into the Model T Ford and went into the little town about two miles away. Cars lined Main Street and brightly lighted store windows were decorated and filled with toys and gifts.

The little boy and his dad, hand in hand, joined the crowd walking up and down the street. They stopped to look in one store window and there before the little boy's eyes was the most beautiful toy he had ever seen - a little golden cow pulling a little golden cart. He was so taken with the sight of the toy he tugged on his dad's sleeve and exclaimed, "I sure would like to have Santa bring that to me for Christmas!"

"Maybe," said his father. "If you are a good boy, Santa might just do that."

As Christmas drew near, the little boy was on his best behavior and became more excited. At night he would lie in bed thinking about the little golden toy and hoping upon hope that Santa would bring it to him.

At last, Christmas morning arrived and the little boy bounded out of bed and hastened to the living room. To his utter delight, he saw the golden cart and cow under the tree. It was his favorite toy and when the family moved to the little town, he made sure the toy rode with him.

Time passed, he met new playmates and they played on the sidewalk and in the yard, and always he had his treasured cow and cart with him.

Then one day, he missed his favorite toy. It had disappeared! He and his family looked high and low all around the neighborhood, but the golden cow and golden cart were nowhere to be found. The little boy was heartbroken.

Years passed, and at Christmas time he would always remember his first Christmas toy and wonder what had happened to it. He got married and sometime during the Christmas season, his family would hear the story about the little golden cow pulling the little golden cart.

One day, he and his wife were in an antique shop where, much to his amazement, he spied a little golden cow, pulling a little golden cart! Excitedly, he showed it to his wife. He was almost certain it was his long lost

toy, especially after the dealer told him he had bought it from a woman who lived in the man's home town.

The man remembered her as being a bit eccentric, and a "pack rat" of sorts. She wore long, dark dresses that nearly swept the ground and always had a dark scarf on her head. She pushed her little boy around town in a crude, homemade wooden baby buggy. She would pick up anything along the street or lying in the ditch and toss it into the baby cart.

That was it! The boy had left the little cart and cow on the street and she had picked it up!

For some unexplainable reason, the man did not buy the toy. Perhaps he was living up to one of the many names his wife had tacked onto him: "Old Ben Put-it-off." Rather, he went home to mull over it all evening and the next day at work.

At quitting time, convinced that it was his long lost toy, he hurried to the antique shop. He was crushed when the dealer said, "I sold that toy today."

The man asked no questions, but went home to tell his tale of woe to his family and berate himself for not getting the toy when he had the opportunity. Time passed and then came that wonderful day in February when tokens and greeting of love and affection are exchanged - Valentine's Day.

After supper, the man and his family sat around the table and exchanged valentines. The man's valentine from his wife was in a fairly large box and appropriately decorated. He carefully unwrapped it and removed a lot of packing. There, to his joy and surprise, nestled among the crumpled paper was the little golden cart being pulled by a little golden cow.

The toy now rests on our bookcase and I look at it often and recall the first Christmas of my memory.



Cole, Papa and Gail Geery examine the Golden Cow and Sandy Andy.

Taws Fats and Screw Bony Tight

When they read the title of this article, old timers will know immediately that I am writing about a bit of Americana that has all but disappeared from the scene. The later generations will probably wonder about my mental condition.

On a spring day in the 1930s, anyone walking down Main Street in Harvey would hear a strange sort of jargon emanating from the alley between the Post Office and the show hall. Shouts of "knuckle down," no snoodgin'" and "rouncy" meant only one thing - the marble shooting season was in full swing.

After the late winter snow melted and the ground dried, the marble shooters emerged from a winter of restlessness ready to duel each other for prized marbles and the reputation as a quality shooter. Some kept their shooting thumb in shape during the winter by utilizing space in basements, coal houses, garages, barns and on the living room floor.

Once the season started, marble fever spread like a contagion among the young and not so young males. The alley was the main arena for the shoot-outs. Players congregated there after school and on Saturday and Sunday. When the alley filled up, overflow games were played on any bare spot of ground large enough to accommodate a ring and room for the shooters to maneuver. Some of the more zealous players would play after dark under one of the streetlights on Main Street. Only the coldest and wettest weather deterred the shooters. Players wearing heavy coats and a mitten on one hand was not an uncommon sight when the weather turned bad.

Marbles came in assorted sizes and colors and were made of different materials. There were the clay commies, glassies, flints, agates, snakies or swirlies, crockies or stonies and the glazed ones with spots on them called bulls-eyes. Steelies or ball bearings were used but were often barred because of the damage they caused to the other marbles. Good taws (the player's shooter) were coveted by the quality shooters. Agates and flints were favored for taws but they were expensive and hard to come by. Some of the old marbles are now collectors items and demand a good price at antique auctions.

Marble players used terms only they understood. Rouncy, fats, knuckle down, screw bony tight, kneesies, sets, foller up or chasies, pushy knuckle, snatch grab and fudgin' or snoodgin' were a part of their vernacular. Some of the terms like rouncy and sets represented an option a shooter could take if he shouted the words before his opponent shouted, "no rouncy" or "no sets." Consequently, the alley echoed and re-echoed with the hubbub of the strange lingo of the marble shooters.

Rules were not hard and fast. Without umpires, referees or adult supervisors, tempers flared and heated arguments sometimes ended in fisticuffs. Such was the case, when my old friend Forest Blake and I squared off in the alley. Neither of us could land a telling blow as we parried each others wild swings with our forearms. Result? A draw, but I ended up with extremely sore forearms next day because his arms were long and skinny. Some players watched our melee but others kept on playing.

Like top-notch athletes, the quality marble players drew spectators when they went head to head. Shooters like Tommy and Cliff Beaver could propel their taws with great velocity and amazing accuracy. Mediocre shooters, like me, didn't back away from games with the good ones even though they picked our pockets with regularity. I always had a feeling of hopelessness when I played Cliff. It was sort of like facing Wyatt Earp with a pea shooter.

On Sunday afternoon young men, who had worked all week, gathered in the alley for a game of bull ring which was played in a ring some ten or twelve feet in diameter. It was sort of a marathon game that went on and on. We youngsters watched with admiration as the oldsters displayed a seemingly uncanny skill with their taws.

I don't see kids playing marbles anymore. I suspect marbles would be much too dull for the gung-ho, macho-oriented youth of today. Last spring, I walked back into the alley in Harvey. The stillness there was broken only by a hen sparrow scolding me from her nest in a hole in the side of the old show hall.



A tense moment as all eyes are on the shooter.

A Pair of Shoes

I recently spent the day collecting money at a rummage sale sponsored by the women of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (I was drafted). A part of the rummage was numerous pairs of shoes and boots. As I watched the people pick through the rows of good shoes, priced ridiculously low, I remembered another pair of shoes.

I am reluctant to admit it, but as young boys in Harvey, we engaged in some pretty silly and dangerous games and exhibitions. On one such occasion, we were demonstrating our manliness by seeing which of us could sink an axe into a stump the deepest. When Tommy Beaver swung and missed the stump, the axe cleaved his foot between two of his toes. Consequently, Tommy spent the rest of the summer hobbling around on a crutch with his left foot swathed in bandages. When it happened, little did I foresee the grief his accident would bring into my simple and carefree existence.

Fall rolled around and the first day of school approached. This meant it was time to buy clothes, shoes and school supplies. Because of the hard times, outfitting five kids for school imposed a big financial burden on our family.

Enter Hettie Beaver, Tommy's mother. She offered my mother a deal she couldn't resist—a pair of Tommy's oxfords for only fifty cents. "New shoes or worn shoes?" "Well, a little of both." You see, Tommy had worn only one shoe that summer, inasmuch as one foot had been encased in bandages. As a result, the left shoe hadn't been worn and the other was well worn and run over at the heel. By the time his foot healed, the new shoe was too tight.

I protested the deal, of course, but getting me shod for only fifty cents was a bargain that Mom could not pass up and my protests fell on deaf ears. When I tried the new shoe on, I prayed that it would be too tight but no such luck. The worn shoe was loose but not too loose by Mom's standards.

"Stuff some cotton in the toes and use a little polish and you'll be all set," she beamed. She was proud of her deal.

"But Mom," I implored, "shoe polish won't shrink that old shoe. If I get in the mud it will pull off."

"If you think that's going to happen," she advised, "put a jar rubber around it."

The first day of school approached much too swiftly as I inwardly stewed and fretted. Hopelessly and in desperation, my ten-year-old mind fantasized various escapes—a freight train to the far west—gypsies—a circus—the Foreign Legion. Each time I looked at the worn shoe, it became wider and more run over. The new shoe gleamed with polish. Resentment toward Hettie Beaver

surfaced and I irrationally blamed her for my predicament. Why hadn't she sold them to someone else? Why not to Abe Walton, he had only one leg-no problem for him. I ignored the reality that Abe probably wore size twelve.

I tossed and turned the night before the opening day of school as I visualized the ridicule I would suffer. Even though I would be decked out in new overalls and blue chambray shirt, I knew all eyes would be focused on my right foot.

My antics on the way to school that first day would have been puzzling to anyone watching. Upon meeting someone, I would stop and nonchalantly slide my worn shoes under some weeds and wait until they passed. Finally, there was no more cover-no place to hide and I entered the school resigned to my fate. When the new teacher greeted me with, "Welcome young man, you look very nice today," the worn shoe shrank considerably. My shoes? Oh, no one seemed to notice.

Most of the shoes at the rummage sale went begging.

HARVEY SPORTSBIT – "DEATH OF A TRADITION." According to oral history, semipro baseball came to Harvey in the early 1900s and was a source of pride and involvement for the people of that small community. The team met and held its own with all teams in the area. The death of Harvey semipro baseball was sudden but not totally unexpected. During WWII, players entered the service and some migrated to defense jobs. Consequently, there was no semipro baseball in Harvey in 1943, 44 and 45. Veterans and migrant workers returned home and on April 30, 1946, the Harvey Indees journeyed to Red Rock and resumed the tradition with a 10-2 victory. The team ended the season with a 13-6 record. The 1947 season looked to be more promising as the team took the field as the Harvey Blackhawks sporting new uniforms donated by the Blackhawk Brewing Company. The season got off to an auspicious start with victories over Monroe, Ottumwa, Kellogg and a 1-0 win over a strong Knoxville team with Noel Whistler, "Pud" Bolton and Hardrock Slay in their lineup. Almost overnight, players left Harvey for various and sundry reasons. As a result, the team journeyed to Corydon with only 7 players. Harvey played the game with 2 players borrowed from Corydon. In a lackluster, spiritless game, Harvey was beaten 8-1. On the way home, the players shrouded in gloom, sensed the futility of trying to continue the season. Harvey semipro baseball died that day in Corydon.

A Depression Christmas

I suspect many of the folks who, like me, grew up in the 1920s and '30s shake their heads in wonderment when they witness the fervor, hubbub and extravagance of today's Christmas shopping. As I view the tremendous volume, variety and cost of gifts available for the Christmas shoppers, I reflect on some of the Christmas times of the 1920s and '30s when the economy went from boom to bust and the country was gripped by the Great Depression.

I recall the first Christmas of my memory, when Santa brought me a gift I coveted after spying it in Marion Wise's store window. Somehow, I surmised, Santa Claus must have known that I had expressed to my Dad a fervent hope that Santa would bring me that gift. That same gift would later disappear and then return to my possession after an absence of some 40 years.

There was the Christmas when we awoke to find many presents and a dishpan overflowing with Christmas candy. We accepted as fact the story that when our neighbor, Bob Piper, had surprised Santa in the act of filling our stocking he had fled, leaving a good deal of his candy supply. We never questioned why it was in the dishpan.

As the economy worsened and the money supply dwindled in the late '20s and early '30s most people were scratching to get enough money for the bare necessities, and as the Depression tightened its grip, there was very little Christmas shopping. Gifts were more apt to be a necessity to be utilized in everyday living.

The memory of one Christmas always seems to surface ahead of all others when I recall those Christmas times past. It is Christmas Eve and part of our family sits in silence around the heating stove in the cramped, drafty living room lighted by the feeble, flickering flame of a kerosene lamp. Dad and one of the kids are upstairs in bed suffering from the flu which has bedeviled our family for a week or two. It is cold and snow covers the ground. The three youngest of the family, Fred, Don and May, who still believe in Santa Claus, have eagerly hung their stockings for Santa and gone to bed early. There is no tree and the only signs of Christmas are two or three green and red chains made at school out of construction paper. The chains hang in the frost-covered windows.

The sounds of severe, intermittent coughing by those suffering from the flu adds to the already depressive atmosphere. Choking back her grief, my mother again reaffirms what she has said several times, "There just won't be any Santa Claus tonight." There is no money and our credit at the store has been cut off except for the absolute necessities.

We all sense and share our mother's feelings as we think of the three young ones getting up Christmas morning and finding empty stockings. This weighs heavily on my sister, Ruth, and she paces from one window to the next, pausing to look out at the snowy scene. Finally, she can no longer stand the thought of no Christmas for the three little ones, who have so faithfully hung their stockings.

Without a word, she dons her wraps and sets off in the cold for town. She is on her way to the store where she will plead with the owner, Jim McKenzie, for more credit which will allow her to buy some gifts for those who have so eagerly looked forward to this night. She must hurry because it is near closing time for the store. It is doubly embarrassing for Ruth because a schoolmate, John McKenzie, is there and listens to her plead with his father for more credit. Dad and Jim McKenzie were once partners in a thriving coal mining venture, but Dad's profit from the mine had long vanished.

The Christmas spirit prevails and Jim grants us more credit. It was the beginning of a happy ending to a heartbreaking evening when Ruth came home with gifts.

Next morning the faces of the three were wreathed in smiles when they found a 10-cent box of crayons, a 15-cent pair of mittens and a 5-cent orange in their stockings. Santa had come through.

A farmer friend, Roy Tucker, stopped and dropped off fresh pork, some apples and some pulp Western Story magazines. Christmas Day was bright compared to the gloom of the evening before. Unlike the abundance and extravagance of today, it took little to have a good Christmas during the Great Depression.

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A WARBIT – During the first weeks of WWII, our company guarded defense installations in the Long Beech area. Several of us were invited to have lunch with members of the VFW Auxiliary group. My hostess, Mrs. White, was a very proper, motherly type. We GIs were on our best behavior and alert not to revert to any barracks language. As the meal got underway, I passed the baked beans to her with, "Care for some beans?" With an elfish smile, she replied, "Oh my! No! They are much too musical for me!" As I left, she handed me this picture and said, "For luck." I have been very lucky.

Bussey Memories

On the Fourth of July, I drove to Bussey as I have done often throughout the years. While waiting for the parade to start, I had a snack in the Bussey Cafe. On my way home, I realized I had walked out of the cafe without paying my bill. Saturday I called the Bussey Cafe and explained to the lady on the phone what had happened and that I would mail them some money. I did so, along with the following letter:

Dear lady on the phone, As you know, I called you Saturday and explained that I had inadvertently walked out of your cafe without paying my tab. Before I could identify myself, you replied, "I know who you are!" Your words seemed to have ominous overtones and I fleetingly wondered if you had called the FBI. Further conversation quickly erased that thought and you generously assured me that I need not make reparations. Why had I forgotten to pay my bill? The most valid reason is that while in Bussey on the Fourth of July, my mind becomes overloaded with memories that flit in and out and tend to render me irresponsible.

Going to Bussey on the Fourth was the high spot of the summer for many of the young people in Harvey. We trapped gophers, put up hay, pulled and hoed cockleburs, mowed lawns, tended gardens and performed other odd jobs to earn money for the trip to Bussey. With change jingling in the pockets of our bibless overalls, we would board the morning C.B. & Q passenger train with our roundtrip ticket to Bussey. The ticket cost about 20 cents and we would return home about 7:30 that evening, worn out from a day of excitement and experiences.

In those days, the carnival on the midway was a beehive of activity with rides and side shows. The Hatcher Players, performing in a big tent, offered top-notch stage performances of comedy and drama. In good weather, people swarmed over the grounds and family picnics seemed to be everywhere.

There were usually two or three baseball games played on a fine field with a neat little grandstand. Quality teams competed and talented players such as: "Pud" Bolton, "Spaz" Pyle, "Lefty" Nichols, "Big John" Barnett and "Hardrock" Slay displayed their talents before large and enthusiastic crowds.

Eventually, I would come to Bussey with the Harvey semi-pro team and hit a bases-loaded home run off a skinny fireballing pitcher named "Red" Durham. We lost 10 to 8. We would later play a Bussey team made up of seven Bonnetts, a King and a Plum. I could report that I hit another bases-loaded home run in that game, but the coffee drinkers at the bakery would accuse me of bragging, so I won't.

I remembered a basketball game in the cracker box gym in the old school

building when Bussey beat us 6 to 4. I started my basketball officiating career in the new Bussey gym.

The first football game I ever saw was between Bussey and Tracy High Schools. As I drove down Main Street in our sleek new car, I recalled chugging through Bussey in the early 1920s with our family in a Model T-Ford on our way to Missouri to visit relatives. During World War II, a small newspaper printed in Bussey was sent to GIs all over the world. I received and read copies in my foxhole in the jungles in the South Pacific. My buddies from New York and Chicago would chuckle as they read the homespun news items.

So you see "dear lady on the phone," my thoughts were many, varied and nostalgic on the Fourth of July in Bussey, and paying my tab just got lost in the clutter.



A WARBIT – The strapping, red-headed Polish boy entered my tent, stuck out his hand and said, "I'm Bob Zaparty from Chicago." "I'm Red Geery from Harvey, Iowa," I replied, shaking his hand. We became the closest of army buddies. We played on the regimental football team. As our division moved through Los Angeles, Ft. Lewis, San Francisco, Hawaii and Guadalcanal, we participated in sports at every opportunity. On New Britain, as my platoon moved out on patrol, Zap smiled, waved and said, "See you tonight Red." When we

returned, we were met with the word that Zap had been accidentally shot and killed. Filled with shock, anger, rage and sickening grief, I wanted to vent my feelings on those responsible. Sanity prevailed. I was both pleased and saddened, when I was promoted to take his place. In his honor, the battalion stood at attention as the flag was lowered. When the echoing bugles sounded taps, my pent-up emotions burst forth and scalding tears coursed down my cheeks into the dust on that barren hill. Echoing bugles still bring tears to my eyes. Not all wound scars are visible and yes, soldiers cry.

The Wrestling Match

I'm sure it is difficult, if not almost impossible, for the young people of today to imagine life without TV, VCRs and the many sources of entertainment and recreation available. Without the present day resources, entertainment in small towns like Harvey was mostly generated locally with local people participating. Sometimes, when I'm asked what we did for excitement in Harvey, I like to tell the story of the wrestling match which is a good example of homemade entertainment and excitement.

It was inevitable that Indian Joe Long and Big Bill Beaver would have to meet in some sort of contest to settle the heated arguments that persisted among the male citizenry of Harvey as to which was the strongest.

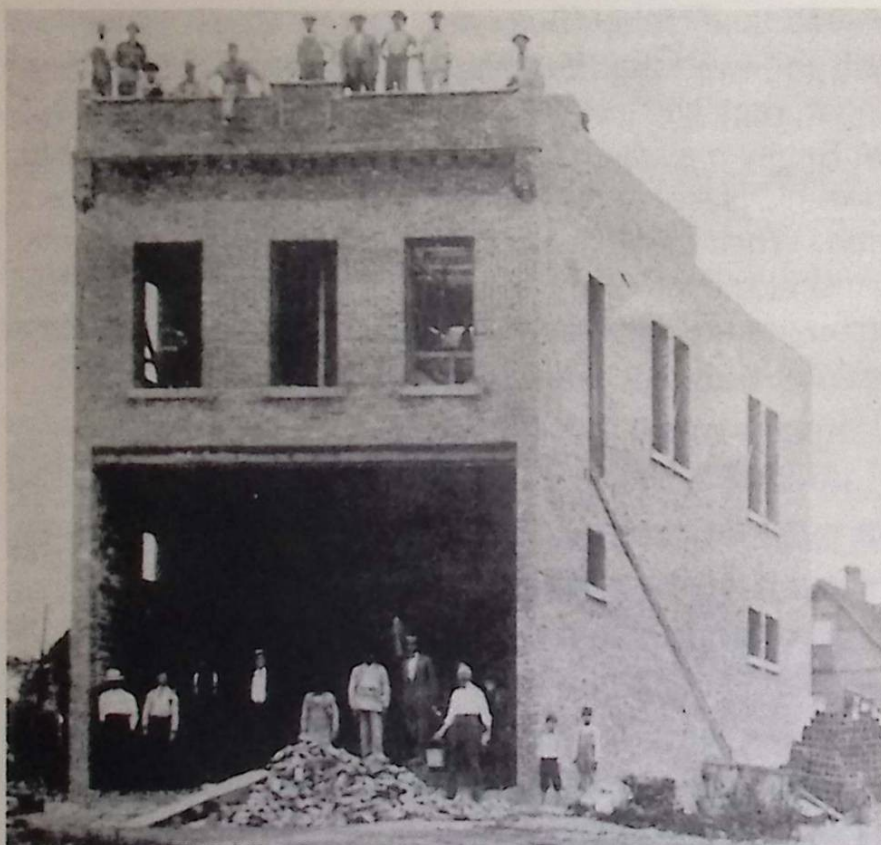
Indian Joe was short and stocky and the rippling muscles of his arms, broad shoulders and ease of movement were evidence of the strength encompassed in his compact body. I don't know if he was of American Indian ancestry, but his handsome, rugged features and black hair was the basis for his nickname. In addition, his nickname helped differentiate him from the other Joe Long in Harvey.

Big Bill was a lumbering giant of a man with a powerful burly frame. His rolling gait and gruff voice combined to give the impression of a grizzly bear.

The inevitable happened when a wrestling match between Indian Joe

and Big Bill was arranged to take place above Paul Thomassen's grocery store. Most agreed this would settle the arguments once and for all. They were forgetting the old adage that "even the best laid plans go astray."

Admission was charged and a capacity crowd contributed to a good sized-purse which was to go to the winner and which was held by



Thomassen Store where Big Bill wrestled Indian Joe.

Paul. Both contestants had staunch backers and wagering was heavy. There was an air of anticipation as the eager and noisy crowd gathered around the canvas stack cover that served as a mat. The excitement mounted as the two foes, stripped to the waist, stepped onto the mat. There would be plenty more excitement but not for the reasons the crowd expected.

History does not reveal what rules governed the match or the exact chain of events. Some said that Indian Joe's headlock on Big Bill slipped into a stranglehold. The referee was either unaware of the stranglehold or didn't realize the consequences. As Big Bill's face began to turn blue, two or three of the spectators pried Indian Joe loose and Big Bill sprawled on the mat with his eyes rolled back into his head and his face the color of a ripe concord grape. The sight of Big Bill in this condition stunned the crowd momentarily and then pandemonium reigned.

Some of the spectators bolted for the exit while others milled about in a state of confusion. Paul Thomassen, sensing a possible liability situation, tried to give the purse to someone and clear the building at the same time. He was unable to do either.

Seeing that Big Bill was in dire distress, my Uncle Brad Geery dispatched his son Orba and Teddy Rice to fetch Doc Lowrey.

Said Brad, "I figured Bill would die if someone didn't do something so I opened his mouth and saw that he had swallowed his tongue. It was no time to be particular so I just reached in with my fingers and pulled his tongue out of his throat."

By the time Doc Lowrey arrived, Big Bill was breathing better but he was visibly shaken by the ordeal.

So nothing really was settled. The argument went on. "The hold was illegal," said some. "Not so," said others, "anything went."

The purse? Some say Indian Joe got it all. Some say it was split. There was only one certain and positive result of the situation. There would never be another wrestling match above Paul Thomassen's store. He would see to that.

* * * * *

A HARVEYBIT – At dusk, Bill Woods, Harvey's old lamplighter, made his rounds lighting the carbide-gas fueled street lights. The flame was housed inside a glass globe on top of an eight-foot-or-so hollow iron post. The gas was generated by mixing carbide and water in a large underground tank. The gas was piped underground to the posts where its emission was controlled with a valve operated by the old lamplighter. "He makes the night a little brighter," croons Billy Williams with Sammy Kaye's orchestra, "That old lamplighter of long ago." "If there were sweethearts in the park," continues Billy, "he'd pass them by and leave it dark." In the mid-20s electric lights came. Improvement? Yes! Romantic? No!

The Hottest Show in Town

Today it costs \$7 to see some movies in New York City. In the early 1920s I engaged in a bit of chicanery and slipped into the show hall without paying the 10-cent admission fee. I just had to see, for the second time in two nights, one of the epics of the old silents, "The Covered Wagons." I viewed the show with one eye on the screen and the other on Mrs. Oldham, the owner, as she periodically patrolled the aisle with a flashlight whose beam I managed to avoid by cowering low in my seat. Those who have grown up with talkies, technicolor and TV, will probably question why anyone would want to see an old silent movie once, let alone engage in subterfuge to see it again.

Perhaps a quote from Elwy Yost's book on movies offers an explanation. "From the moment a steam engine plunged toward the audience from a screen in a hall in New York in 1896 and emptied the first 15 rows, the cinema clearly established itself as a medium of excitement, motion and a sensation which seemed as real as reality itself." For almost the first 40 years of this century, movies were the dominant instrument of entertainment and the only dramatic entertainment for millions. People flocked to see the magic of the silver screen which created great excitement and filled them with innocent awe and wonderment.

In those days we didn't go to a movie in a theatre, we went to the moving picture show in the show hall over the restaurant on Main Street in Harvey. Two features were shown weekly, one on Tuesday and Wednesday nights and one on Friday and Saturday nights. "Ben Hur," "The Ten Commandments," and other classics might run three days. With no commercial electricity available, power for the projector was generated by a gasoline engine and a generator in a building in the alley. Sometimes the engine would conk out and the crowd would sit in the darkness while someone hurried down the stairs and got it started again. On warm summer nights, with the doors open for ventilation, the pung-pung-pung sound of the engine exhaust would waft into the hall.

Nothing lured the movie goers and aroused their emotions more than the old serials which starred, among others, the great serial queens Ruth Roland and Pearl White. Two reels were shown weekly, with each episode ending with the heroine trapped in a life-threatening situation as the hero fought against insurmountable odds to come to her rescue. Everyone knew she would be rescued but her predicament would be a topic of conversation throughout the week as fans speculated on how the hero would accomplish such a monumental task.

Following the serial, we rode with William S. Hart, Tom Mix, Hoot Gibson, Yakima Canutt and the other cowboys of the silents and stood by them with guns blazing as we rid the West of rustlers and other outlaws. We blocked for Richard Dix as he threw the pass for the winning touchdown in "The Quarterback." We roared with delight at the antics of the great comedians Harold Lloyd, Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin. When Clara Bow and Esther Ralston played out the final scenes of the emotional melodrama, "Children of Divorce," uncontrolled sobbing could be heard throughout the hall. Simply put, in those days people got into the movies - "they seemed as real as reality itself."

One of the integral parts of the old show hall scene was the piano player whose music always fit the action on the screen. The frantic music for the chase, the somber music for the death scenes, the romantic music for the love scenes and the melancholy music for the heartbreak scenes were the magnets that helped pull the fans into the story unfolding on the screen.

The hottest show in town? The high intensity carbon lights that provided light for the projector also generated a lot of heat. One night, while Reed Ward and Guy Roper were in the projection booth, the projector became overheated. As the cowboy embraced the girl in the final scene, his hat began to turn black and soon the entire picture disappeared. The reel had caught fire and smoke billowed from the booth as patrons scurried for the exits. Guy and Reed were singed a little but luckily nobody was hurt. Now you can't get a show much hotter than that.

Despite the great advancements in movie making, I feel a sense of loss at the disappearance of the innocence, simplicity and intimacy which spawned a 40-year love affair between the movie goers and the old movies.



Steely-eyed William S. Hart,
star of the Silent Screen.

Miami Vice, Harvey Style

During Prohibition, and even after Prohibition ended on Dec. 5, 1933, bootlegging was a part of the American scene. Home brew and "corn squeezin's" were made in many communities—some for only the makers' consumption and some for peddling. Once, while hunting rabbits, I literally fell into a still. It was completely underground and cleverly camouflaged. I was impressed by all of the copper coils, vats, boilers, etc. The operator was eventually tripped up by his path through the cornfield, which appeared to lead nowhere and which was spotted from the air by the Feds.

Lew White, the soft-spoken, grizzled city marshall at Harvey wasn't afraid of the Devil but he wasn't stupid. So when he went to arrest Neal Dalton for disturbing the peace that hot Saturday night, he deputized Bill Wilson, the WWI vet, to assist him. Neal had wrapped himself around some of the fire-water that was available in the area and was creating a ruckus. Neal had a reputation as being a "toughie" when sober and doubly so when he was imbibing. Following his arrest, Neal was escorted to Mayor Albert Crosby's house where court was set up in Albert and Nellie's kitchen. Word of Neal's arrest spread quickly and a sizable crowd gathered outside the mayor's home which was also home for a great number of cats. Albert and Nellie took in every stray cat that made its way to their house.

My cousin Orbra and I sat on the ground behind a row of shrubs from where we had a close-up view of the proceedings through the open kitchen door. Neal, flanked by Lew and his deputy, stood facing Albert across the kitchen table. Neal declined to be seated and glowered down at Albert who peered out over his spectacles which had slid down almost to the end of his nose. The mayor attempted to question Neal but Neal was surly, uncooperative and hostile. He completely bamboozled poor Albert with his answers and remarks. Albert was in over his head. Nellie, a tall gaunt woman whose hairdo made her appear much taller, hovered nearby looking as though she would like to come to Albert's rescue as the situation deteriorated. The situation worsened when Bill Wilson, the deputy, became disgusted, tossed his badge on the table and stalked out. Lew knew he had his hands full as Neal become more intimidating.

The hearing was interrupted when Jenny Foster, a friend of Neal's, entered the kitchen and was given permission to talk to the prisoner. Neal and Jenny engaged in a brief whispered conversation beyond the earshot of the others. She exited the kitchen and left the area. The hearing resumed and there was some conjecturing among the spectators as to the significance of Jenny's appearance. I doubt that anyone quite expected the next turn of

events. There was almost total silence as the crowd strained their ears to hear what was being said in the kitchen. The silence was broken by the beep-beep of the horn of a Model T Ford which came chugging around the corner and down the street by the mayor's home. As the Model T drew near, the horn sounded again and Neal made a break for the door. Through the door he bolted and in the process stepped on one of the many cats lounging around the door. The cat let out one unearthly yowl after another! Neal hurdled the shrubs behind which Orba and I were now flattened because Lew was right behind Neal and stood over us with a pistol drawn and pointed at the fleeing Neal. We were wanting out of our ringside seats.

"Halt in the name of the law!" Lew shouted repeatedly but Neal wasn't to be deterred. He knew Lew wouldn't shoot at him as he ran through the crowd.

"Give me the gun, Uncle Lew," shouted Frankie Burtlow, "I'll shoot him!" Those words caused instant panic and the crowd scattered in all directions. Frankie with a gun would have created mayhem. Lew brushed Frankie aside, lowered his gun and stood watching as Neal jumped on the running board of the Model T which sped down the street and disappeared into the darkness.

I think Lew was somewhat relieved by Neal's escape. After all, it was a solution to a problem that was reaching a point of being unsolvable. Was Neal ever apprehended? Not to my knowledge. He probably rode a freight into Des Moines and laid low until the whole incident blew over. I'm sure Albert and Nellie never forgot that night and it was the talk of the town for awhile.

For years I thought that Jenny drove the get-away car but she confided to me that she planned the escape but that the escape vehicle was driven by "Mink" De Reus, the one-handed baseball pitcher. Luckily, the cat was the only casualty, but I suspected it survived the episode-nine lives, you know!

* * * * *

A HARVEYBIT – Old men were part of our growing up in Harvey. Their tales of the Civil War, WWI, mining, politics, history, sports, hunting, trapping, hoboing, etc., found receptive ears as we gathered around the teller seated on a bench in the park or on Main Street. Some embellished their stories with heroics and astuteness. Others depicted themselves as the goat of the story. Some were oft repeated but we didn't care. Old men and the story telling have disappeared from the scene. I used to go to East Ward School and tell stories to the children. Now when I walk by the school they look at me askance and retreat from my path. To Old Dan, Jim, Kas, George, Bill and the many others I say, "I'm glad I knew ye."

Nightmare in Moulton

I suspect that many folks have had an experience in their past which they look back on and wonder if it really happened or if it was a bad dream. My cousin Orbra and I had such an experience one late-summer night in the mid-1930s.

It was a Sunday when we hopped the Wabash freight in Harvey intending to ride it to Tracy, get off and walk out to Bellefontaine and watch the Bellefontaine Senators play baseball. Much to our chagrin, the train sped through Tracy and we didn't get off until it reached Moulton. To get back to Harvey, we would have to ride the tender of the locomotive on the passenger train that left Moulton around 3 o'clock the next morning. We spent the rest of the afternoon idling away our time on Moulton's main street.

As we walked toward the depot to begin our long wait, we were startled to see a car careen around a corner and speed erratically up the street. We concluded the driver must be drunk or crazy!

We fell asleep sitting on a depot bench and around midnight were awakened by a man standing in front of us dressed only in Army khaki trousers. Around his waist was a wide leather belt with a large brass buckle (in the Army we called them garrison belts). When he saw us awaken, he stood at attention and gave us several snappy right-hand salutes. Who is this guy and what gives we thought? In our conversation with him, he told of his experiences as a U.S. Marine during the occupation of Nicaragua. Suddenly he became quite agitated, took off the belt, entwined it around his arm and wrist and slashed the big brass buckle viciously through the air at an imaginary victim exclaiming, "This is how we kept those #*\$&{% gooks in line in Nicaragua!"

He then became quite pleasant and invited us to go to his drug store for some ice cream. With time to waste we accepted his invitation. We got into his car and were heading toward town when he suddenly announced, "This is how I used to drive taxi in Chicago!" He floored the accelerator, the tires screeched as we careened around the corners and sped up the streets. Orbra and I looked at each other in dismay. We were in the same car being driven by the same man we had earlier labeled as being drunk or crazy!

Once inside his drug store he provided us with a cone-shaped paper liner that fit in the metal dishes in which ice cream was served in those days. He then began dipping out the ice cream and flinging it at us while exhorting us to "catch it!" We caught very few and the floor was soon splattered with blobs of ice cream. When he appeared to tire of this diversion, Orbra and I exchanged looks which said, "Let's get the h— out of here!" Unfortunately,

we waited too long. Reaching under the counter he pulled out a 45 caliber service revolver, pointed it at us and said, "How would you guys like to have a bullet right between the eyes?" (or words to that effect.) I almost fainted. I was much too young to die. Orbra and I stutteringly replied that we didn't think too much of the idea. Suddenly, he tilted the gun muzzle upward and BLAM! BLAM! fired two shots overhead into the ceiling. I felt like throwing up. Apparently tiring of the whole situation, he stuck the gun in his waistband and told us to get in his car and again we hurtled down the street and careened around the corners back to the depot.

We scrambled out of the car and scurried into the depot. He ignored us and wandered around outside and intermittently fired his gun three or four more times. I'm not sure what he fired at. We heaved a sigh of relief when he got in his car and drove away. The depot agent didn't seem to get too disturbed over his actions. In retrospect, it is my opinion, based on information I received several months later, the locals didn't condone his behavior but tolerated it.

Readers are probably thinking, "Why didn't they do this and why didn't they do that?" When you are a young teenager in strange surroundings, under stressful and bizarre circumstances and frightened, your thinking becomes somewhat muddled. Staring into the muzzle of a 45 revolver doesn't do much to alleviate the situation.

Shortly after our experience, I read in the paper that the Moulton drug-gist had been committed to the State Psychiatric Hospital at Mt. Pleasant for drug addiction.

* * * * *

A HARVEY SPORTSBIT – On Sunday, August 5, 1928, the Harvey baseball team defeated the Pella town team 6-2 on the Harvey diamond. Kersey and H. Freeman formed the Harvey battery while Pella had Rysdam on the mound and Brafhart doing the catching. Shepard and Kersbergen scored for Pella. Birdsell, Parsons (2), R. Ward, W. Bean and Kersey crossed the plate for Harvey. On August 19, Harvey will play Eveland at Harvey.

The East St. Louis Incident

Recently, while watching a TV film clip showing characters wearing snap brim fedora hats, I was reminded of an incident which brought me in brief contact with similar characters.

A couple of years after the end of World War II, I rode the Wabash passenger train to St. Louis to see a ballgame and get together with some Army buddies. We had all shared the heartbreak and hardships of combat in the South Pacific and Philippine campaigns.

I was the guest of Ed Higgins, a feisty, hot-headed, frail-looking lad of 18 years when he joined our outfit. In combat, he was hard as nails, but Japanese shrapnel riddled his body and he spent several months in a complete body cast before being discharged.

The highlight of my visit was a reunion with three other E Company vets—pudgy John Polinski, a super softball pitcher; burly Harold Snyder, a former professional baseball catcher in the St. Louis Browns farm system; and Bill Laughlin, a big, affable Irishman.

We got together and began an evening of imbibing, reliving our Army experiences and visiting a variety of St. Louis night spots. Midnight came and my buddies decided to show the old sarge East St. Louis, which, in their words, was “wide open.” On the way across the Mississippi, I was given all kinds of advice such as “stay close together,” “keep your hand on your billfold” and “don’t get involved with any of the characters you might encounter.”

I was sure they were “laying it on” a little thick for my benefit. Nevertheless, I was a little apprehensive. Our first and only stop was at a smoke-filled, all-night bar and bowling alley. A quick survey of the people present did nothing to alleviate my apprehension.

We were standing as a group watching the activity around us when the noise level suddenly and acutely subsided. A man wearing a black derby hat and flanked by two men wearing snap brim fedoras had walked in and stood watching the bowlers. It was evident by the reaction of the crowd that the man in the middle was well known and of quite some importance.

When Higgins spied them he exploded, “There’s that blankety-blank Barney Dickmann!”

Of course, I didn’t know Dickmann from Adam’s off ox. I would later learn that he had made many enemies as the highly controversial mayor of St. Louis from 1933 to 1941. As the powerful head of the St. Louis faction of the Democratic party, he had led an unsuccessful fight against Harry Truman’s candidacy for the U.S. Senate. Truman was backed by the equally powerful Pendergast machine in Kansas City.

At the time of my visit, Dickmann was the St. Louis postmaster.

Without warning, Higgins confronted Dickmann and engaged him in a heated and animated conversation concerning Higgin's mother. The rest of us were aligned behind Higgins in a supportive posture. The confrontation became the center of attention and, quite frankly, I was getting itchy feet.

The verbal setto ended suddenly when one of the two men at Dickmann's side growled, "You'd better get your boy out of here before he gets hurt."

Simultaneously, both men unbuttoned their suit coats and placed their hands on their hips. This action exposed the gun butts protruding from their shoulder holsters. The sight conveyed a powerful message and Laughlin, Snyder and I forcibly dragged the furious Higgins out the door to the car.

Later Higgins explained that his mother had been a ward heeler working for the Democratic party and had been promised a good job by Dickmann. Dickmann reneged on his promise, thus incurring Higgin's wrath.

In 1979, during the process of organizing a reunion of E Company vets, I learned that Polinski had died of a heart attack, Snyder had become a victim of Alzheimer's and Higgins and Laughlin, both asbestos workers, had died of lung cancer. Bernard "Barney" Dickmann had died from a fall at age 83.

That leaves me and possibly the two body guards as survivors of the "East St. Louis Incident." I surely don't want to see them again.

* * * * *

A DEPRESSION BIT – "Morning came dismally. There was no escaping the cold rain which swept across the Nebraska plains and pelted the bedraggled group of humanity huddled among the crates and pieces of machinery. I crouched behind a big crate, cold, wet and miserable. Thoughts of the old heating stove and a hot breakfast of Mom's biscuits and gravy tortured me. Except for an occasional muffled curse that seeped from a sodden human lump, the click of the wheels, the locomotive whistle and the spatter of the rain were the only sounds. As the train rolled through the rain, a man stood up and relieved himself over the side of the flatcar. The wind carried the urine back over men huddled at the tail-end of the car. With their backs to him and the rain falling, they were never aware of what was happening. Next day the sun beat down on us unmercifully as we entered the great expanse of the Nebraska sandhills." *(from author's account of riding freight to Montana)*

The Mark of the Gin Horse

Nestled in a secluded little valley north and west of the Harvey corner on Highway 92 is a place I used to take my family almost yearly. We would go there to hunt mushrooms, pick wild flowers and to see the mark of the gin horse. It is the site of the abandoned Black Diamond Coal Company once owned and operated by my father, Arch Geery, a one-time circus roustabout and Jim McKenzie, the taciturn Scotsman who came to America at the age of two. A waste pile and stumps of tippie pilings stood as monuments to the good times of a bustling coal mining operation in the early 1920s. The visits gave me an opportunity to share with my family my memories of the mine as we walked through the debris strewn about.

I would tell them of our family's grief and anxiety when that nightmare of all miners, a slate fall, crushed my dad to the mine tunnel floor where fate intervened to prevent a fatal injury. After days of hospitalization and recuperation, he returned to the mine and the Geery kids viewed with awe and fear the culprit piece of slate as it lay exhibited on the waste pile. Time and weather deteriorated the would-be killer. I would point out the area where coal haulers gathered before sunup to await their turn at the loading chute. There was a great demand for Black Diamond coal and wagoners would travel in the wee hours of the morning to get to the mine for early loading. Some would come from Pella the evening before and stay all night. It was a long, hard pull back to Pella over dirt roads with a wagonload of coal.

Then there was Daisy, the cute, cuddly, little burro, who was used underground to pull the coal cars. She was almost a family pet and we felt anger and sorrow when she died of blood poisoning in a wound inflicted by an over-zealous mule driver. We kids wrapped one of her tiny shoes in tinfoil and hung it on the kitchen wall in remembrance of her.

As a seven-year old, I would spend many Saturdays at the mine. At noon, I sat with grizzled, grimy-faced miners with names like Bryant, Nail, Staley, Crook and Williams who came out of the mine to eat from their tin dinner buckets. Having snacked my lunch away earlier, I would covetously eye Bill holding his fork poised over the pie and then with an elfish grin hand it to me. I don't think he had any children of his own.

Our family's visit to the old mine site would culminate with my tale of Buster the gin horse. A big, white, ten-year old draft horse, Buster provided the power to get the coal out of the mine. Hitched to a gin pole sweep fastened to his back, he would respond to a command from the top man and then powerfully, steadily and dependably go around and around powering the gin which hoisted the loaded coal car up the shaft to the top of the

tipple. On another command, Buster would turn around and then go around and around the other way lowering the empty coal car into the mine. All day long he responded - around and around - around and around. In the heat of summer, when not pulling, he would stand looking very much like he was asleep with eyes closed, head hanging almost to the ground, one hind leg relaxed and his tail perpetually switching flies. When the snow and cold winds of winter came, Buster stood and shivered. Although he was blind, Buster performed his job faithfully without flaw. My dad, usually the top man, had a close relationship with the old gin horse. He watched helplessly one day as the gin pole sweep broke loose and swung around with great force and speed, striking Buster in the back of the head, killing him instantly. Dad grieved over the loss. Steam power replaced the gin and the gin horse.

Buster, however, left his mark. In making his endless trips around and around day after day, his hooves cut a deep circular trench. The trench became more shallow each year after the mine closed but I would point it out to my family as I finished the story of the faithful old horse.

Our kids grew up, graduated from college, scattered, and the trips to the old mine ceased.

The little valley was awash with spring when I returned to the mine site this year. Mushrooms were plentiful and I walked through a purple-blue carpet of Sweet Williams as a chorus of song birds warbled from the tree-top greenery. The waste pile had gotten smaller and I wondered fleetingly if pieces of the slate that had fallen on Dad were still in the pile. The stumps of the tipple pilings had weathered away more and one toppled without resistance when I pushed on it. I walked by the pool of dark, murky water that oozed and gurgled restlessly where the mouth of the mine shaft once provided access to the coal vein below.

Eagerly, I scanned the ground for the mark of the gin horse but did not see it. Somewhat dejectedly, I squatted on my haunches to survey the area from that position. Then I saw it - ever so faint but it was there! Steady, faithful and dependable Buster had made his mark and now after more than sixty years it was still there. Not bad for an old blind gin horse. What's that you say? You can't see the mark? Oh, I can. Yes, I surely can.

A Three-legged Stove And Other Perils

Recently, after getting out of bed from the comfort of an electric blanket and inner-spring mattress, dressing in the comfort of central heating, using the bathroom facilities and flipping the switches of the many electrical appliances, I gazed out the window at the wintry landscape and reflected on the winter of 1927-28.

Much like today, all Americans did not share in the boom times of post-WWI. Contrary to much thinking, the Wall Street crash of '29 did not suddenly plunge the country en masse into the Depression. For many in the lower segments of the working class and many in agriculture and rural communities, the 1920s were not all happy days.

The early 1920s were the best of times for our family. A flourishing coal mining business, which was sold, provided us with a new car, a two-story, eight-room house and a good life. In four years, a failed mining venture and a disastrous farming experience plunged our family into an economic nightmare. Winter found our family, all nine of us, huddled in a three-room house beset by debt, sickness and a severe shortage of money. Winter ended Dad's sporadic employment with a road contractor who could not always pay him. The contractor could not get his money as state and municipal governments could not always meet their obligations. The money supply in the United States was "drying up!"

Mike Wilson, the contractor and Dad's close friend, bought a small coal mine about three miles southwest of Harvey, and Dad began a one-man operation trying to eke out a living. There were numerous small mines in the area and people needed coal. Most were unable to pay for it, however, because their seasonal employment had ended and there was no unemployment compensation.

Having narrowly escaped death in a mine accident, Dad would not work in the mine alone and hired a part-time worker. Often, when circumstances dictated, I would miss school and go with him to the mine. Mostly, he wanted company.

My brother Bud and I slept on a straw tick on the floor behind a small three-legged stove which was no match for the pervasive cold that invaded our house. Two bricks substituted for the missing stove leg and my 11-year old mind fantasized all sorts of terrible consequences should we dislodge the bricks and cause the stove to topple over.

In our crowded quarters, few nights passed without frequent interrup-

tions of sleep by the crying of 18-month old Edna May plagued by a severe glandular infection and by the coughing of those suffering "miserable colds."

The trips to the mine are remembered for their utter misery. After dressing in the ever-present chill, there was a shivery trip to the outdoor facility that was often short circuited by the presence of a convenient snowdrift.

Fortified with a body-warming breakfast of Mom's biscuits and gravy prepared on a battered old range, we climbed into a Model T Ford with a racer body and set out for the mine. In the pre-dawn darkness we careened and skidded our way over the snow-packed road with only a low windshield for protection from the biting wind and numbing cold. Our skimpy winter clothing was no match for the elements and when the cold became unbearable, I cried and breathed a muffled plea into the length of flannel wrapped around my face, "Please, God, don't let me freeze to death." We practically hugged the stove in the mine shack as we tried to thaw out. A crisis developed when a rear tire was ruined. Dad, a master of improvisation, scrounged some hay rope and wrapped it coil-like around the rim. The rope served as a spare until money was available for a tire.

The slope mine ran far back into the hill, and in the room where we worked it was a comfortable 50 to 60 degrees. Being a scrawny kid, my contributions to the operation were limited. One task was to go outside the mine to the powder house and bring explosives back to Dad. This required me to walk close by the mine mule that was tied along the main entry. I was afraid of the mule because I felt he was waiting to kick me or bite me with his big yellow teeth. I could see his eyes glowing in the dim light of my carbide lamp. To avoid his anticipated attack, I would slowly approach and then race by him. One time, as I raced by, my head collided with a wooden cross member and I sprawled on the floor of the entry. My light had fallen off and gone out and I lay there in the darkness expecting to be attacked at any moment. Frantically, I groped for and luckily found my light, which I lit and scurried to safety.

The cold ride home was more bearable. I looked forward to a warm bath in the galvanized wash tub and a probable supper of hot corn bread and beans. Life's pleasures were simple during those trying times.

The Harvey Oasis

After a recent visit to the fine new Knoxville Recreation Center, I reflected on the swimming sites in and around Knoxville in the mid-thirties. In addition to the normal heat of Iowa summers, droughts brutalized the area in 1934 and 1936. Day after day of temperatures in the 90s and 100s, with little rainfall, burned crops and dried up the pastures. Sunsets were reddened by red Oklahoma dust borne aloft and swept northward by blistering southwesterly winds.

Devising ways to escape the heat was a constant challenge for Marion County residents. Nights were often little cooler than the days. Electric fans constituted air conditioning for those who could afford them. Bug bombs and insect repellents were not yet commonly available. Yet, in spite of bugs and mosquitoes, people slept in parks, in their yards and on the floor in front of open doors-anywhere to catch a cooling breeze.

Knoxville's swimming spot was a shallow pond located where Ken Locke Stadium now stands. At one time, ice was harvested from the pond and stored in a nearby ice house. People sought relief from the heat by swimming in the Des Moines River, creeks, sandpits, abandoned quarries and strip mines. All of these places were dangerous and accidental death by drowning was not uncommon. In desperation, some shared farm ponds with the animals and that without benefit of chlorine.

For people with transportation, there was a fine swimming spot on the island about one mile north and east of Harvey. Mention the Harvey sandpit to some Knoxville old-timers and their faces light up with smiles that signal memories of good times past. The large body of clear deep water and a fine white sand beach were the ultimate answer to beating the heat, and people from around the county gathered there seeking diversion from the heat that gripped Iowa.

Many families with children came daily from Knoxville and surrounding areas to escape the heat and enjoy the sand and water. Some swimmers brought beach umbrellas, beach balls and other recreational gear. One group brought boxing gloves and impromptu boxing matches were the order of the day. At times, there was a festive atmosphere on the beach. Those who worked through the heat of the day flocked to the sandpit in the evening and many stayed late into the night. The moon and the glow of open picnic fires provided the only lighting necessary on the beach.

It was not unusual, after closing time on Saturday night, for a caravan of cars filled with Knoxville business people to make its way to the Harvey sandpit. After sweltering all week in their stores, they brought beverages and

food to the white sand beach and unwound in the welcome coolness of the clear water. Oftentimes it was daybreak when they returned to Knoxville. My beachcombing efforts the following morning were usually rewarding.

Our family lived on the island and those driving to the sandpit had to go through our yard. To compensate us for the dust they kicked up and the noise they created, we charged a fee of fifteen cents per car. Today, we would be called entrepreneurs. Actually, the depression was still with us and we needed money for paint and wallpaper for our house so we let the swimmers help us out. On one Sunday more than 50 cars passed through our gate.

There were no lifeguards, but only one drowning occurred over the years. This was really remarkable in view of the great number who swam there.

The high waters and floods eventually destroyed the sandpit swimming place and only a small pond of water surrounded by a thicket of willows remained when I last visited the spot.

I drove to the island recently hoping to visit the place that provided so much relief and diversion for so many people during the sweltering summers of the thirties. I was greeted by a big sign that said, "NO TRESPASSING," and there were no kids around to collect my 15 cents.



1939-40 Harvey High School Baseball Team — Won 14, Lost 1. Front row, L to R: F. Harrington, D. Geery, R. Harvey, P. Holdsworth, A. Breuklander. Back row — C. Parker, P. Rigger, C. Harrington, R. Runnels, B. Dennis, Wayne Berry, Coach. After service in WWII, Harvey, Holdsworth and Geery were offered contracts to play professional baseball.

Oh, Those Kentucky Wonders...

Each spring I plant a dab of garden. As I work the soil and plant the seed, I often think of my mother and the big gardens I helped her plant and tend.

My mother was a provider. Early spring found her out gathering a variety of wild plants which included the much maligned dandelion. "Greens" were a welcome addition to our vitamin-deficient winter diet. She thoroughly enjoyed taking us kids into the woods to hunt mushrooms. During the summer, she led us on forays to pick wild blackberries, plums, raspberries and gooseberries which were canned or made into jam and jelly. I hated to stem gooseberries. She made deals with folks to pick their fruit on shares. We got half of what we picked. She mixed mulberries with rhubarb to make ersatz strawberry jam. A well-stocked cellar helped carry our family through the winters of the Depression. There were no food stamps to fall back on when money ran out. During the canning season there was a certain air of competition among the women of the community. When groups gathered, women would proudly announce the number of quarts of certain fruits and vegetables they had canned. Some numbers were amazing. Some announcements caused a few eyebrows to lift.

Dad supervised the planting of the potatoes. Then, mom took over and with the help of us kids planted and tended a huge garden. Gardening was a serious business with her and we followed her instructions to a T. Seeds were planted at the right depth and covering seeds with cloddy soil was taboo. I still have guilty feelings when I get in a hurry and rake cloddy soil over the seeds. In the heat of the summer we hoed and pulled weeds early in the morning and late in the evening. Potatoes were sprayed with Paris green but we still had to pick off the beautifully colored potato bugs and put them in a tin can with some kerosene in it. When dry spells came we carried water to the plants. With traps and a quick hoe, we disposed of any gophers or moles that invaded the garden. One of my mother's favorites was Kentucky Wonder pole beans. One year, as we planted them, we seemed to go on and on. Mom would make the seed bed and I would drop the seeds. I was definitely interested in how many hills we planted because I would have to get the poles. I was hoping we would soon run out of seed but on we went, 40 hills-50 hills-60 hills, her a-digging and me a-dropping. Finally, after 80 hills, we ran out of seed.

She was real pleased and reminded me that I would have plenty of time to get the 80-plus poles we would need. Four poles were tied tepee fashion and a row of horizontal poles would connect the tepees.

The fish were biting and the swimming was good at the sandpit so I put

off getting the poles until I got an ultimatum-no more fishing and no more swimming until the poles were in place. The thought of having to get 80 or 90 poles had made the fishing and swimming much more inviting.

With axe in hand, off to the willow patch I went to begin the laborious task of cutting and trimming 90 sturdy poles about eight or nine feet long. I would cut about 15, then lash a rope around them and drag them the half mile to the garden. Much to my chagrin, I would meet my buddies with fishing poles in hand heading for the sand pit. In a few days I had the job completed and in due time vines covered the poles and the long-podded Kentucky Wonders hung on the vines in profusion. It was quite a sight and even though it had been a lot of work, I felt a sense of pride. Needless to say many quarts of Kentucky Wonder "hullies" were canned and enjoyed during the following winter.

A number of years back, I planted eight hills of Kentucky Wonders and drove down by Durham to get some poles. My kids couldn't quite understand why I went to so much bother to have a few pole beans.



Author's brother-in-law, Floyd Milledge, prepares to shuck corn on an island farm. He will do it the hard way, "by hand" and toss the ears against the bang-board on the wagon. Into the frosty fields at day-break, good pickers could shuck and unload 100 bushels by twilight. Once, eight families lived on the "upper" island. Now, no one lives there. The one who took this picture was standing about 50 yards from the site of the diamond on which the Red Brush baseball team once played (see page 63).

A Gopher Economy

The coming of spring had a special meaning for many of us boys in the small town of Harvey. The warm winds and sunshine meant that the pocket gophers would soon be at work throwing up new mounds of dirt, and we would be out setting traps trying to catch them. For each pair of gopher front feet, the county auditor's office would pay us ten cents. A dime was not to be sneezed at in the early thirties when the country was in the grip of the Great Depression.

Pocket gophers, with their long, sharp incisors and large-clawed, front feet, were pesky rodents. They dug their burrows and pushed up large mounds of dirt which smothered the grass and hay and damaged mower sickles. Underground, they fed on the roots of the crops causing a lot of damage, and some farmers would pay an additional five cents for each gopher caught in their fields.

Trappers usually worked in pairs and had their own closely guarded secrets on how to catch the wily gophers. Forest Blake and I were eighth grade classmates, friends and trapping buddies and were quite successful at it. As soon as the new mounds appeared, we established our trapline and had as many as twenty-five traps set. We would roll out of bed about six o'clock, eat breakfast, and hurry to run our traps before going to school. After school we ran our traps and made new sets.

Digging out the entrance to the main burrow and getting the one-ought steel trap set properly and in the right location required a certain amount of skill and savvy. Then, covering the burrow again so no light would seep in was an absolute necessity, because failure to make a good set would tip off the gopher that danger lurked in the burrow. He would then proceed to skillfully pack dirt around the trap without getting caught. The dirt would be packed so tightly we would have a hard time removing the trap. To be outwitted by a gopher and having a "clogged hole" was not only aggravating but also a blow to our trapper's pride.

There were even hazards in gopher trapping. One fellow got his finger nipped by a gopher as he reached into the burrow to clean out some loose dirt. Bull snakes slithered through the burrows on occasions. The most demoralizing times occurred when a polecat blundered into one of our traps. This caused more problems when we went on to school after killing and removing the polecat. Our entry into the schoolroom would produce a chorus of "pee-hews," and the teacher would promptly send us home for descenting. Our hands became chapped and mighty sore from digging in the dirt barehanded and then washing in a nearby stream or at the school pump.

Then came a Saturday morning after two or three weeks of trapping and we were off to Knoxville, the county seat, to collect our bounty money! In a festive mood, several of us would hitchhike up Highway 2 or hoof the eight miles up the Burlington Railroad track.

I don't think the girl at the county auditor's office especially enjoyed seeing gopher trappers come in. The accumulation of gopher feet stored in a Calumet baking powder can was sometimes putrid and smelly. She would turn her head and lift her nose in disgust when she removed the lid from the can to count the feet. Sometimes, they were so bad she trusted us to tell her the number of pairs we had. I didn't know anyone who took advantage of that situation, but there were rumors that some trappers actually encouraged the deterioration of the feet so they could hike the count when she took their word.

Buoyed by the jingling change in our pockets and folding money tucked in the bib pocket of our overalls, we sauntered jauntily around the square. Peering into the store windows, we speculated on how we would spend our newly acquired wealth. Purchases might include a cheap ring and a twenty-five cent baseball at the "ten cent" store and a blue chambray shirt for fifty-nine cents from J.C. Penney's. A pair of much needed Rockford socks for fifteen cents from the People's Store was almost a standard purchase.

Noon was time to head for the Jones Cafe where we ordered the twenty-five cent special dinner of beef, noodles and mashed potatoes or baked Virginia ham and scalloped potatoes. If we were really feeling flush, we would order a generous slab of raisin pie for another dime. That was really living it up!

One-thirty p.m. found us seated in the Grand Theater after casting an admiring eye at the pretty girl in the ticket booth and paying the twenty cent admission charge. With a five cent sack of popcorn in hand, we sat on the edge of our seats awaiting the start of the show starring Jack Holt, Ken Maynard, Bill Boyd or some other western hero.

After the show, we hiked down Highway 2 looking wistfully at every passing car and hoping that someone would pick us up so we could get home before dark. Back home, tired but happy, we would proudly show our new acquisitions to our admiring family and tell them all the details of our trip to the county seat, including a vivid account of the picture show.

The gopher economy flourished through the spring and tapered off during the summer. Excess money was stashed away for trips to the county fair and Bussey on the Fourth of July and for school clothes and supplies in the fall. These extraordinary rewards made the toil of gopher trapping well worth the effort.

Tale of A Transient

On our recent trip to Seattle, my wife and I stopped in Laurel, Montana. Fifty-one years ago I stopped in Laurel under somewhat different circumstances.

No one really knows how many people were unemployed at any given time during the depression but estimates ranged from 12 to 16 million. As a result, a vast army of jobless and homeless people were riding the freight trains that criss-crossed the United States. The Southern Pacific railroad tried to keep the people off its trains. Finding it impossible to do so, they added empty boxcars for the transients to ride in. It was estimated that from one to two million people were riding the freights during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Many towns along the railroads had a hobo jungle where transients brewed coffee in a tin can, cooked food scrounged from stores, restaurants and townspeople. They slept in the open on pallets made of cardboard, straw—anything that would protect them from the cold and dampness of the ground. In inclement weather they huddled under makeshift shelters or found refuge in vacant buildings. Jails were often opened to transients for overnight lodging. Where were they all going? Some were looking for work. Others were just on the move. "Catching a handful of boxcars" was an escape for many caught in the hopelessness of those trying times.

To help some cities cope with the influx of migrants, the Federal Government established transient camps where the travelers could obtain a limited number of meals. One such camp was located in Laurel where three railroads converged. This resulted in a great number of transients passing through the small town.

In the late spring of 1935, Orbra Geery, Bill Hegwood and I, all teenagers, joined the army of transients one night in Albia when we climbed into a boxcar of a westbound Burlington freight train. We had squandered some of our meager funds on hamburgers and cokes at an all-night diner in Albia—something we would regret later on.

Being neophytes, we soon learned the hard way that riding a freight was dangerous, dirty and exhausting. At Glenwood, an unfriendly security man, known as a railroad bull, castigated and threatened us as we hastily scrambled to the ground over the side of the gondola (coal car) we were riding in. That night, like frightened rabbits, we muddled our way through the huge railroad yards at Lincoln, Nebraska. Rain, a hot wind, a scorching sun and lack of food tortured us as we rode across the plains of Nebraska on a flat car crowded with other transients. Tiny cinders from the belching smokestacks

of the two giant coal-fired steam locomotive pelted us at times, further adding to our discomfort. Famished, we practically depleted our dwindling money supply for food in Alliance, Nebraska. At Sheridan, Wyoming, law officers in force blocked our way into town telling us the citizens were tired of being constantly besieged by transients asking for handouts. It was there we learned of the transient camp in Laurel and our spirits rose at the possibility of a meal that evening. As we rolled through the railroad yards in Billings, Montana, we dodged the swinging saps of the railroad bulls. They were angry because one of their group had been killed the night before when he surprised someone looting a loaded freight car. The patience of the railroad security men was sorely tried as they tried to cope with the hordes of people riding the freights.

Disillusioned, hungry, dirty and exhausted we got off the freight outside of Laurel near a hill which would later be named Hobo Hill. We were still two miles away from the transient camp kitchen where we hoped to eat.

Mustering all our energy, we hurried down the road as fast as we could go, hoping desperately the mess hall would not be closed. We didn't make it. I don't know whether it was our sorry appearance or our cajoling and pleading that persuaded the man in charge to re-open and feed us a meal of wieners, sauerkraut and prunes. Few meals since have ever tasted better.

We bedded down that night among the clumps of sagebrush under a Montana sky awash with stars and the light of a full moon. Scores of bodies of sleeping transients could be seen scattered over the area.

On August 20 of this year, Florence and I rode into Laurel in our air-conditioned car and cruised past Hobo Hill down the road that Orbra, Bill and I had so wearily trudged to get to the transient camp mess hall. That night we enjoyed a pasta dinner at the La Pasta Trattoria restaurant and spent the night in the comfort of the Best Western Locomotive Inn. During the night I was awakened by the whistle of a freight train locomotive, and once more I relived my first visit to Laurel more than half a century ago and remembered those days of despair.

* * * * *

A HARVEY SPORTSBIT – March 1933. The Harvey semipro basketball team wends its way across country, through Bussey, to play Al Simpson's Hiteman team. Much of the graveled road is soft and rutty. Manager Dick Riggins parks near the gym and the one-seated Model A Ford disgorges its load—Dick, Merlyn Ward, Bud Geery, Rupert Wilson and Geryll Lash as Shorty White and I uncurl from the trunk! Things were tough all over!

The Golden Age of Radio

Before television, there was radio. Before radio, there was no means by which entertainment, news and sports could be sent into thousands of homes simultaneously. In 1920, KDKA in Pittsburgh broadcast the returns of the Harding-Cox presidential election. Two years later, more than 500 stations were on the air.

The popularity of radio increased at a rapid rate. During the dark days of the Depression, as theater and movie crowds shrank, radio audiences grew. It was reported that destitute families often gave up ice boxes, furniture and bedding and clung to their radios, which were their only source of entertainment and link to the outside world.

Unlike today, many homes had no electricity. Consequently, many early radios were powered by an assortment of dry cell batteries. Later on, a 6-volt wet battery became a part of the power plant. When the wet battery ran down it had to be lugged to the local garage to be recharged. This action sometimes resulted in battery acid being spilled on the carrier's overalls - presto, ventilated overalls!

A proper aerial and ground rod were requisites for good reception. Usually, the aerial wire was stretched between two high poles or trees and there were arguments as to whether it should run east and west or north and south. The ground wire was attached to a long iron rod driven into the ground. On occasion, when the reception wasn't too good, someone was dispatched to pour water around the ground rod. Sometimes it helped.

The first radios had an assortment of dials and levers which had to be coordinated just right to tune in a station.

Listening to the radio followed an established pattern in many households. The radio's use was tightly controlled in our house by the emphatic admonition, "Don't waste the battery."

Housewives could mend, iron or quilt in the afternoons as they listened to "Pepper Young's Family," "Vic and Sade" and "Ma Perkins," the forerunners of today's soaps. Children hurried home from school to do their chores before settling in front of the radio to listen to 15-minute episodes of "Dick Tracy," "Terry and the Pirates," "Jack Armstrong" and "Little Orphan Annie."

On cold winter nights, with supper out of the way and the dishes washed, the entire family huddled in front of the radio to enjoy the comedy of "Amos and Andy," "Lum and Abner," "Fibber McGee and Molly" and the thrilling adventures of Jack, Doc and Reggie on "I Love a Mystery" and the drama of "Texaco Star Theater." On Saturday night, many families listened to the WLS barn dance from Chicago or Nashville's Grand Ole Opry. Late

Saturday night, young adults would perhaps roll back the rug and listen and dance to the music of the big bands coming from far away - glamorous and exciting places such as the Trianon Ballroom in Chicago or the Grand Ballroom in the Roosevelt Hotel in New Orleans.

Rather than listening at home, fans would gather around a radio in some business place to listen to championship boxing, the World Series and football games. The great announcers such as Clem McCarthy, Graham McNamee and Ted Husing made the dulllest contests sound exciting.

President Franklin Roosevelt took to the airways in 1933 with his famous "fireside chats." His calm, firm and reassuring voice gave hope to millions of Americans battered by the Great Depression. Now we get "TV bites" of politicians dancing to the tune of their puppeteers.

Unlike television, radio stirred and whetted the imagination of youngsters and oldsters alike. Fictional folks became real. Kids joined Little Orphan Annie's secret society. With decoders and glow-in-the-dark rings, they really got into the adventure series. In 1938, when Orson Welles dramatized the invasion of the United States by the Martians, many people panicked as they accepted the reality of a Martian attack.

Now youngsters watch television with a sort of zombie-like stare. Nothing is left to their imagination. There is no need for them to even laugh - canned laughter does that for them.



Oh! What a Time!

In rural communities, during the 1920s and '30s, it was a time of anticipation and excitement. It was a time for cooperation and socializing. It was a time for hot and dirty work. Some called it a romantic time. It was threshing time!

Getting ready for threshing time actually began in late fall and winter when grain binders were repaired and serviced. Some farmers did their own work and others utilized the village blacksmith. When the grain had ripened, the farmer seated on the binder pulled by four or five horses entered the field. There the binder cut the grain, bound it in bundles and spewed them out on the ground. Shockers, many of them from town, followed a required method and placed the bundles in shocks. It was hot, back-breaking work.

In 1926, my Dad and Bill Rice resurrected the Case steam engine that Dad had used to hoist coal from the Black Diamond mine. Dad, Bill, my brother Bud and I went by car to Des Moines where a big Red River Valley Special separator was purchased. I was 10 years old and barefoot. It was my first trip to Des Moines. We ate a lunch of crackers, cheese, cookies and soda pop on the banks of the Des Moines River just north of where Sec Taylor Stadium now stands.

The arrival and unloading of the separator from the railroad flat car in Harvey drew a number of curious onlookers. They gathered each day as repairs and adjustments were made to the engine and separator.

Anticipation turned to excitement when the big rig finally moved up the street and headed for the first threshing site. Kids trotted along on the sidewalk. Folks stood on the street, in their yards and on porches, fascinated by the powerful engine snorting smoke and hissing steam as it moved ever so slowly up the street. To the delight of the kids, Dad would occasionally toot the steam whistle.

At last the rig reached the field where the separator and engine were leveled and aligned and the big drive belt slipped on. A wagon loaded with coal was pulled in and parked near the engine. A ready supply of water was vital. My Uncle Brad ran the water wagon pulled by two horses. The water tank was filled by using a horizontal pump operated by pushing and pulling a long wooden handle. Sometimes the water wagon had to go some distance to get water. When the water level ran low, two toots on the whistle meant hurry!

The stage is set. The curtain will rise at dawn and the threshing scene will unfold in a flurry of organized activity. At daybreak, the steam engine is fired up. Extra help from town arrives. Bundle wagons and grain wagons,

pulled by prancing horses with harness adorned with trappings of brass, celluloid and ivory, converge on the field. Some teams sport fly nets. No self respecting farmer would think of using anything but his best on the threshing run. He knows his horses and equipment will be under close scrutiny, and besides, it is an opportunity to show off just a bit.

The first loaded bundle wagons pull alongside the separator and Dad slowly opens the throttle on the steam engine and the drive belt slowly activates the separator. It shakes and rattles as the engine, like a prehistoric monster, snorts and hisses and the drive belt speed increases. All eyes are fixed on the separator which is now giving off a high volume of assorted noises as the many belts and pulleys whirr faster and faster.

The first bundles are fed to the slashing twine cutting knives, and in a short time a cheer goes up as straw spews from the stacker pipe and grain augers into the wagon. Threshing is underway and will continue until dusk.

Not far away another beehive of activity has started at dawn. Farm women, in a hot steamy kitchen, are preparing food. As they work, their chatter intermingles with the clatter of pots and pans. The menu has been planned in advance, but there may be a subtle attempt by the hostess to work in something "extra" in an attempt to earn compliments from the crew.

At noon, hungry threshers converge on the house. They wash up in a variety of pans, tubs, etc., and sit down at a table groaning under the weight of the legendary "dinner for threshers." This is also a time for socializing and sometimes overt flirtations among the unattached young men and women.

Dinner over, there is a brief time for smoking and lounging under a convenient shade tree. One member of the threshing crew is envied by all the young boys. He is the water boy. Mounted on a pony and equipped with two stoneware jugs wrapped in wet burlap, he keeps the crew supplied with drinking water.

Dismay, when a load of bundles slide off the rack; the sense of urgency as the crew strives to finish a field as rain clouds gather on the horizon; the straw stackers, looking like bandits with the bandannas covering their noses and mouths. What a hot dirty job!

Despite the hot, dirty work, a festive spirit seemed to pervade the threshing activities. This summer I watched a huge combine in a field in Illinois kick up dust and chaff. No other people or machines were in sight. At noon, I thought, the operator will shut off the machine, jump in a pickup and drive to town to a fast food place for dinner. Not too much anticipation and excitement in that, and it certainly wouldn't be romantic.

Island Living - the Bridge

A recent news story about three children being killed on a railroad bridge dredged up memories of one of the hazards we faced while living on the island east of Harvey.

The Rock Island railroad bridge was the primary means, and sometimes the only means, for islanders to walk to and from the island. Even under "normal" conditions, the ford could not be used by people on foot. In the 1920s, a number of children walked across the train bridge going to and coming from the Harvey school. This was a worrisome thing for island parents and small children.

In the 1920s there were a number of trains, both passenger and freight, that crossed the island on their runs between Oskaloosa and Knoxville. Island children were constantly being lectured on how to react if caught on the bridge by an approaching train. Don't panic and try to run and beat the train across the bridge, they were warned. They were told to stay calm and take refuge on one of the piers or trestle supports. Remember now, if you run you might step between the ties and be unable to pull your foot out!

With these words, a horrible picture was verbally painted depicting what would happen if this should occur. So what happened one morning as my sister Dorothy and I were crossing the bridge? About halfway across, we were startled by the sound of a train whistle behind us. We turned to see a train, with the engine belching smoke, bearing down on us. I'm sure it wasn't coming as fast nor was it as close as it seemed. Nevertheless, the sight threw us into a panic. She grabbed my hand we began to run!

In a matter of seconds, the dreaded thing happened! She stepped between the ties and fell, yanking me off my feet. Her homework and books went flying. As I fell, I threw our syrup-bucket lunch pail, and when it landed, the lid came off and our egg sandwiches and oatmeal cookies disappeared into the thicket below.

Like any nine-year-old, I was frightened and sobbed as I tried to help Dorothy free her foot and at the same time watching the smoking engine drawing nearer. Dorothy freed herself about the same time the engine, hissing steam, came to a stop a short distance from us. Evidently the engineer



The bridge — lifeline to the island. The ice is going out.

had seen our predicament and had sufficient time and space to come to a stop. A brakeman gave us a mild lecture and helped us on across the bridge. Dorothy suffered leg abrasions and torn hose. The kids at school shared their lunches with us.

Another time, Ted Rice and I pulled our cart, made with two cultivator wheels, across the bridge to Clarence Lundy's icehouse, where we loaded it with two chunks of ice and started back across the bridge. We were motivated by the thoughts of homemade ice cream and cake that evening.

In the middle of the bridge our exuberance was displaced by fear and anxiety at the sight of an oncoming train. Frantically we muscled the loaded cart onto a pier and then took refuge on the other end of the pier. All is well we thought as the train rolled by. Those thoughts vanished when we heard a loud crash. A step on a boxcar had hit the cart, sending it and the ice crashing to the ground below. The train stopped, and a crewman gave us a tongue lashing. Had we stayed with the cart, there is little doubt but that we would have been severely injured or killed.

While it was a railroad bridge, hundreds of people walked across it; cars and trucks were driven across it; doctors making calls walked across it; fuel, corn, hay and other supplies were lugged across it; farm machinery was man-handled across it and bootleg whiskey was carried across it.

Over the years many stories surfaced concerning the bridge. Supposedly, in the inky darkness of midnight, a very inebriated man decided it best to crawl across the bridge and passed out when he went head to head with a big hound dog. On a cold blustery night in January 1932, men from the Robert and Evans mortuary pushed a small four-wheel railroad cart across the bridge to get the body of my ten-year-old brother Frederick.

Concrete has now replaced the ties on the bridge, but no one lives on the upper island anymore.

* * * * *

A HARVEY SPORTSBIT – July 1, 1927. The hitters dominated as the Harvey semipro baseball team defeated the Marysville semipros today 14-13 on the Harvey diamond. L. Reilly and Sams shared the pitching duties for Marysville with E. Godfrey behind the plate. Webb and Giorgetti shared the mound for Harvey, and H. Freeman did the catching. Harvey went into the ninth inning trailing by one run. Van Alst's third hit of the day drove in 2 runs giving Harvey the victory.

The Cultivator Jockey

As an eight-year-old, moving onto the island farm in 1925 provided a situation that contributed greatly to my knowledge of sex and procreation. I soon learned that the old cows didn't find their calves in the haystack and that the old sows didn't find their piglets in the weed patch. I even figured out that Dr. May didn't bring my baby sister, Edna May, in his little black bag. In those days we didn't have television to educate us and open discussions of sex, births, etc. were tabu.

In my lifetime, I have worked at many different jobs. I have worked as a plow shaker, pick-off man, tile and block wheeler, tile and block setter, tile and block pitcher, coal heaver, sawyer, fence builder and gandy dancer to name a few. One of my first and also one of my most disagreeable jobs fell on my nine-year-old shoulders on the island farm. I doubt that very many have had this same experience.

Farming in the mid-twenties without present day equipment and machines was a hands-on operation with all family members participating to the full extent of their capabilities. Consequently, when one of the greatest nemesis of the island farmers made their appearance, all available members of the family, armed with hoes, attacked the lowly and despised cocklebur. They were a tenacious pest and we never seemed to get the best of them. When the time came to cultivate the cross-checked corn, Dad marshalled his forces of six horses, three one-row cultivators, a hired hand and my brother Bud and me. There was one major hitch, Bud was not big and strong enough to man the shovels and control the horses at the same time. My dad, Arch, a great one to improvise, obtained and fastened an iron seat to the cultivator tongue in very close proximity to the posterior of our team of horses, Polly and Fred. Polly, my horse (we kids all claimed a horse), was a steady, powerful bay mare and was blind. Fred, a roan, was skittish, high-strung and flighty. I had my hands full as I perched on the iron seat on the cultivator tongue with arms outstretched much like a driver on a racing sulky at the county fair. As we slowly moved down the exceedingly long rows, the sun beat down on my extended arms which resulted in a first-class sunburn that was periodically and painfully swiped by a fly-fighting, switching tail.

Because of my tender age and naivete, other aspects of the job were embarrassing and degrading. As I concentrated on my driving, my olfactory nerves were regularly and noisily assaulted by the variety of excretory functions of Polly and Fred. Sometimes my clothes and even parts of my body were recipients of traces of windblown emissions. Oh where was the E.P.A. when I needed them! I forgave Polly because she was my horse and vented

my anger and frustration at Fred whenever possible. Complain? I suppose I did, but Dad, having once been a circus roustabout, determined that "the show must go on!" Benefits? I suppose that if I had decided to be a veterinarian I would have had the advantage of having early knowledge of certain parts of a horse's anatomy. Since I didn't become a veterinarian, I have written it off as a part of my life I could have done very well without.

Harvey Noses Out Knoxville Club 1-0

(Special to Herald)

Harvey, June 2, 1947. — The Harvey Blackhawks and Knoxville Merchants tangled in a tight ball game at Harvey on Memorial Day, the Blackhawks snatching a 1 to 0 triumph in a pitcher's duel.

The lone tally came in the sixth when W. Geery led off with one of Harvey's two safe hits, White was safe at first as Geery was forced at second, White stole second and came home when Dyer, Knoxville short-stop, threw high to first. The throw was deflected into rightfield and White scored standing up.

Knoxville threatened seriously in the eighth when they loaded the bases on two hits and a walk but Whistler popped out to end the rally.

Holdsworth, on the mound for Harvey, was touched for four hits and struck out seven while Bolton, veteran curve baller for Knoxville gave up only two hits but three Knoxville miscues marred his excellent hurling job.

Shobe of Harvey and Whistler of Knoxville both hit doubles.

Score by innings:

	123	456	789	R	H	E
Knoxville.....	000	000	000	0	4	3
Harvey.....	000	001	00x	1	2	1
Batteries: Bolton and Slay; Holdsworth and H. Geery.						

Harvey Blackhawks Beat Ottumwa 6-2

(Special to Herald)

Harvey, May 13, 1947. — Combining some long distance hitting with three oppositions errors, the Harvey Blackhawks defeated the Ottumwa All-Stars 6 to 2 on the Harvey diamond Sunday.

Harvey went out in front in the first inning when the All-Stars miscued twice and Bates and Bob Harvey hit a double and triple, respectively. The Ottumwans came back with two in the fifth on a walk, two errors and single by Larue but the Blackhawks clinched things with three more in the sixth on an error, walk, Archibald's double and Harvey's second triple of the day.

Holdsworth went the route for Harvey giving up five hits and striking out three while B. Jones and Larue shared the mound work for the Ottumwans, being touched for nine hits.

Score by innings:

				R	H	E
Ottumwa.....	000	020	000	2	5	3
Harvey.....	300	003	00x	6	9	3
Batteries: B. Jones, Larue and H. Jones; Holdsworth and H. Geery.						

Spring on the Island

About a half-mile east of the Harvey city limits lies a geographical entity that has long been called "the island." In the early part of the century, the Des Moines River left its banks and gouged a new channel through an inert waterway known as both "the cutoff" and "the lake." Further on downstream the original main river again left its banks and cut a new channel through a near-dormant waterway called "the old slough." As a result of this, a tract of land about three to five miles long and about a half-mile wide became surrounded by water - the old bed on the west and the main river on the east. A silted-in portion of the original channel divides this tract of land into the upper and lower island.

Some nine families lived on the upper island at one time and a bridge at



Our home on the island for eight years. On bank of old bed of Des Moines River up which steamboats once navigated.

the northeast part of the island provided a short and direct route to Pella. The bridge was destroyed by floods and ice jams and was never replaced. The branch of the Rock Island railroad from Oskaloosa to Knoxville

crossed the upper island. Its high grade anchored a horseshoe-shaped levee that offered protection to three farms. We moved onto one of those farms in 1925.

Although spring was always welcome, its consequences were not wasted on the islanders. With a cold winter came thick ice on the river. Apprehension grew as melting snow and rain created the situation for the breaking up and moving out of the ice, which often meant ice jams at the bridges and flood waters pouring over the island.

I remember when in the middle of the night the muffled booming of the breaking ice reverberated across the island like a distant artillery barrage. It was kind of scary. One spring the churning of the huge pieces of ice threw hundreds of fish out onto the river bank. My brother, Bud, brought home

some large catfish that were cleaned and fried and then thrown into the garbage. They were heavily tainted with some kind of gas that was being discharged into the river in Des Moines.

When circumstances caused the river to overflow its banks, migrating ducks and geese by the thousands took refuge on the broad expanse of water that stretched from river to river in some places.

After the fields dried, farmers could be seen breaking cornstalks with a length of railroad rail pulled by horses. Broken stalks were then raked into windrows for burning. It was a fun evening when we went out at dusk to set fire to the windrowed stalks. The burning stalks could be seen from quite a distance.

Weather permitting, the horse-powered plowing, discing, harrowing and planting went on at a determined pace. However, other springtime activities were not neglected. Mushrooming in the timbered areas along the river was excellent. Fishing paraphernalia such as trot lines, throw lines, wire traps and nets were put in place. At spawning time, islanders went into the water to hand fish for the big cats that lay among the rocks and logs. Yes, there were snakes and turtles, but they never bothered us. Four or five farmers put in large melon patches. Young boys trapped gophers for the bounty and to rid the fields of the pests. Fishing trips to the sandpits on the island netted strings of yellow-bellied bullheads and crappies.

In our pasture was a sign of spring activity several years prior to our moving there. There appeared to be the faint outlines of a baseball diamond. I would learn from Zeke Wilson that he had played on the Red Brush baseball team whose home field has been in our pasture. I was never sure the reason for the Red Brush tag until just recently. In the fall the right-of-way of the Rock Island railroad on the island and eastward was ablaze with the brilliant red foliage of the sumac plant; thus, the name Red Brush.

Residents on the island were often referred to as river rats. They accepted the name with a sense of pride because life on the island was a little different and offered some unusual challenges and hardships.

I made my annual spring trek to the island recently. There are no houses on the upper island and the large fields looked sort of barren. The steady discharge of water from the Red Rock Dam is contributing to the erosion of the river's banks, which will, in my opinion, return the river to its original path. Not soon, but eventually.

Depression Economics

Recently, while thumbing through some books on the Great Depression, I found pictures of grocery store fronts with their specials advertised on the big front windows. The items and prices were printed on the windows in big white letters and numbers with a mixture of chalk dust and water.

"Why not compare those prices with current prices," I thought.

Well, why not? I then pretended that I went to the store in 1938 and made the following purchases: 10 pounds pears, 1 pound cheese, 10 pounds onions, 9 pounds sweet potatoes, 10 pounds white potatoes, 2 pounds cookies, 5 pounds cabbage, 10 pounds apples, 2 pounds coffee and 4 pounds prunes. For those items I paid a grand total of \$2.22.

Still pretending, I went to the three stores in Knoxville, using sales prices when possible, and for the same items I paid a whopping \$48.14. Here is a comparison of the prices: pears, 26 cents/\$8.90; cheese, 17 cents/\$2.40; onions, 19 cents/\$6; sweet potatoes, 25 cents/\$5.31; white potatoes, 14 cents/\$2; cookies, 25 cents/\$3.20; cabbage, 9 cents/\$2.95; apples, 27 cents/\$7.20; coffee, 35 cents/\$3.78; and prunes, 25 cents/\$6.40.

These comparisons, of course, arouse all sorts of reactions and feelings, but read on before marching on the grocery stores.

With groceries so cheap, you might think folks had a lot of money for other things. Not hardly, wages were also cheap. About that time, I started working at the Rolscreen Company for 22½ cents an hour, helping make the first Pella windows. Workers at the Harvey brickyard earned 30 cents an hour. We loaded coal by hand into the trucks at the strip mines for 30-35 cents an hour.

Wages were low and we paid no income or sales taxes. Gasoline was 6 gallons for a dollar. For many there were no electricity or gas bills, as kerosene and gasoline lamps provided light, and heat came from coal and wood-burning stoves. Few people had telephones, and water was pumped by hand from shallow wells. Indoor plumbing was a rarity and there was no sewer tax on the outdoor privy.

Rummage sales were unheard of. Excess clothing was passed on to siblings or neighbors. Overalls were patched and repatched by necessity and not by design. Many families canned vegetables from their gardens and canned excess fruit given to them by farmers with large orchards. It was not unusual for people to raise chickens and pigs and keep a cow in town.

How about eating out? In 1935 at King's Cafe in Clarksville, Ark., one could get hot catfish, creamed potatoes, vegetable, caramel creme pie, hot rolls and coffee for 25 cents.

Readers may draw their own conclusions from all of this. In the '30s, the cost of living was low, wages were low, the standard of living was low and people were stressed out. Today, the cost of living is high, wages are high, the standard of living is high and people are still stressed out.

One man pretty well summed up the situation during the Depression when he said, "Yes, pork chops were 3 pounds for a quarter, but I didn't have a quarter."



The west side of the square in Knoxville, Iowa, showing The Peoples Store where we spent some of our gopher money.

The CCC

I once mentioned to Susan Whitaker that I had been in the CCC camp in Knoxville. With a perplexed look, she asked, "CC camp, what was that?" Like a lot of folks, she said CC instead of CCC.

The Civilian Conservation Corps was President Roosevelt's idea conceived during the dark winter of 1932-33. Launched just one month after his inauguration, it was the first and most popular of his national recovery programs. With more than 16 million adults unemployed, it was almost impossible for youths to find work. They were faced with walking the streets or bumming their way around the country on freight trains. As a gangly sixteen-year-old graduating from high school in 1933, I can attest to the hopelessness of the employment situation for young men.

Youths from families on relief were given preference, but other young men were also enrolled in the CCC. Ranging in age from 18 to 25, enrollees earned \$30 a month and were provided with food, clothing and medical care. They were housed in over 1,400 camps scattered throughout the country. The enrollees themselves received \$5, the other \$25 went directly to their families. With cabbage and onions selling for two cents a pound and potatoes at 84 cents a bushel, \$25 was a boon to hard-pressed families. Initially, some local citizens were reluctant to accept the "CCC boys," especially in small western communities, where many enrollees from large cities were sent. The negative feelings vanished and many CCC veterans were assimilated into the communities when their enlistments were up.



The Knoxville CCC Camp located where the high school now stands. It was abandoned in 1939.

More than 300 types of work were carried out under the guidance and control of the Departments of War, Interior, Agriculture and Labor. Projects ranged from flood and soil erosion control to reforestation and building of parks and lodges. Evidence of the work of the CCC can be found at nearby Lake Ahquabi, Lake Keomah and Lake Red Haw and many parks throughout the country.

The men of Company 2718 of the CCC came to Knoxville on June 12, 1935, to occupy a newly built modern camp located where the high school now stands. The primary program of the Knoxville CCC was soil erosion control. The men built wire check dams, sod dams, concrete dams, terraces, wire fences, planted trees, etc.

One of the most remarkable results of the CCC program was the change it brought about in the young men. Many came into camp undernourished, discouraged, badly clothed, resentful and sometimes hostile. Regular hours of sleep, plain but wholesome food, regular hours of work in the outdoors and comradeship soon changed their outlook on life. They filled out physically and became self-confident and self-reliant. Helping their families gave them a feeling of worthiness. Educational programs, both technical and academic, were part of the CCC life. Some 50,000 illiterates received a grade school education in the CCC. Most camps had athletic teams. Our boxing team was coached by John Neumann, Knoxville's "fighting cop." Fight cards were held in the Memorial Hall with amateur teams from Des Moines and other CCC camps.

Ask veterans of the Knoxville CCC camp their opinion of Captain George Martin, the camp commander, and you will get a variety of answers. To some, he was a tyrant. To others, he was an army officer doing a tough job in a firm but fair manner. His policy was simple, "Obey the rules or out you go with a dishonorable discharge. There are plenty of others waiting to take your job." He demanded that camp facilities be kept orderly and meticulously clean. Enrollees were required to maintain a high standard of personal hygiene and cleanliness. After experiencing Captain Martin's CCC discipline, army discipline was a snap for me. The Knoxville camp moved to Oskaloosa in 1938. The CCC program lasted until a year after Pearl Harbor.

I once spent the night in a CCC camp in Glasgow, Montana. I slept in a barracks occupied by newly arrived enrollees from Brooklyn, New York. They had no idea where they were. Their rapid fire Brooklynese talk was difficult for me to follow and they did say "poiple" and "shoit." When I said I was from Iowa, one lad piped up, "Oh, a cowboy eh!"

The words of an aging CCC veteran pretty well sum up the CCC experience for most enrollees, "During those years I grew up physically, mentally and spiritually. It was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life."

The Infernal Machine

Saturday morning, April 21, 1990, was a good news-bad news day for me.

I awoke to find the area shrouded in a dense, depressing fog. The weatherman forecasted the fog would lift and the sun would make an appearance. That was the good news. My spirits rose and I made plans to do some yard work.

Now the bad news. My spirits were dashed and I was plunged into a state of anxiety and deep despair when the mailman delivered us a Notice of Delinquent Taxes from the Marion County Treasurer's Office. The notice was not signed and there was no person's name on it. I assumed we were issued the notice by some "Infernal Machine."

What really alarmed me was that part of the notice was headed Tax Sale Notice. That threw me into a state of panic (I panic more easily as I grow older), and the panic increased as I read, "Tax sale will be held at 10 a.m. third Monday of June in Treasurer's Office, June 18, 1990."

Oh, no! That must mean our home for 30 years is going to be sold at a tax sale!

On to the next part of the notice, "After the sale....." After the sale meant to me that our home would be sold. Surely, I thought, we should have an opportunity to pay our delinquent taxes before our home is sold, but the Infernal Machine's notice did not say that was possible.

The courthouse was closed so I had no recourse but to stew and fret about the notice over the weekend. The words, "Notice of Tax Sale," and "after the sale," kept flitting in and out of my mind and I began to think of what I might do to forestall the impending calamity that was about to descend upon us.

Plea bargain. Sure, that's what I'll do! Pete Rose and Michael Milken have done it, so why can't I? How about my military records? Four years and seven months in the Army Infantry! Three years in the South Pacific! Combat Infantry Badge! Bronze Star! Four campaign ribbons! Philippine Liberation Medal! Good Conduct Medal! I'll bet Pete Rose, the deposed baseball idol, can't say as much.

Oh yes, Infernal Machine, I coached and umpired Babe Ruth and Little League. I was also a den mother in the Boy Scouts! Yes, den mother! I have taught Sunday School and substituted in the pulpit! Has Michael Milken, the junk bond king, done as much?

I have never been in jail. Wait a minute! I did spend a night in the Grand Forks, N.D. jail when I was riding the rails during the Great Depression. It was a cold rainy night and the jailer let a couple of us sleep on some card-

board on a cement floor in the jail. Surely all of this merits some leniency which would allow us to pay our delinquent tax bill!

While working in the yard, I became melancholic as I reminisced about our family and the good times we had shared in our home. I even had a touch of paranoia when I saw a couple of cars going slowly by with the occupants appearing to be eyeballing our property. Had the Infernal Machine somehow tipped them off?

The anxiety and worry exploded into a terrible nightmare Sunday night. I dreamed I was witnessing the auctioning of our home. The winning bidder was a grinning Japanese soldier in uniform.

"Ah so," he taunted. "You chase us off Hill 600 on Luzon, but I am winner now." That is when I lunged at him and fell out of bed.

I paid our tax bill on Monday, April 23. I voiced my anger and frustration over the inhumane nature of the notice as I interpreted it. The Infernal Machine and the "system," of course, were blamed. Surely some human being has control over the Infernal Machine and the "system." I certainly hope so.

Being astute readers, you will recognize that some of the above is fictional and has been concocted to make a point about the Tax Sale Notice, which was factual.



From L to R are brothers Henry (Bud), Don and Woody Geery. Bud served with troops that freed the prisoners from the Nazi concentration camps. Don was on Saipan with a B-29 group that bombed Japan. Woody served in the infantry in the Pacific. He earned three campaign stars, the Combat Infantry Badge and Bronze Star medal.

A 1930s Saturday Night in Knoxville

In spite of ongoing field work and threshing, there has been a good crowd in Knoxville this afternoon. Attendance at the matinees at the theatres has been good with many children accompanied by parents attending. Shopping has been active at stores both on and off the square.

Between four and six o'clock there is a lull in the activity and some townspeople park their cars on the square and walk home, thus assuring themselves a choice seat for "crowd watching."

Around six there begins a steady influx of cars arriving on the square. Farmers with eggs, cream and chickens drop their produce off at Dickerson's and Bill May's and some other stores.

Lines form for the early movies. Bing Crosby in "Waikiki Wedding" is playing at the Grand and Roy Rogers and Dale Evans are starring in a western at the Marion. People in the line at the Marion discuss the Buck Rogers serial. Some allow as how the ray guns and spaceships are a little far-fetched, but others aren't so sure.

As the evening progresses, the crowd swells and the sidewalks are crowded. Parking spaces on the square are non-existent and side street parking is filling up. Young men, many dressed in white shirts, seersucker pants and two-toned shoes, stroll hand in hand with girls dressed in summery frocks.

Knots of men gather and discuss crops, weather, and politics, among other subjects. Groups of women meet and talk about the week's happenings and upcoming events. Other folks gather on the courthouse lawn and fill the courtyard benches.

The country is gripped by the Great Depression, but Roosevelt's programs have brought some relief and the crowd is in a festive mood after a long hot week of labor in oven-like kitchens, brickyards, coal mines, on railroads and construction.

There is good-natured bantering as baseball players from semi-pro teams around the country gather and talk about tomorrow's games. Bussey will play at Dallas, Swan at Marysville, Leighton at Bellefontaine Senators and Red Rock at Harvey.

Shopping at J.C. Penney's, Rees and Core, The Blue Front, Strasburger's Rouze Hunter's, Morkert's Market, A&P, Jennings' IGA, United, Jack Sprat, Dunlap's Drug, Osborn's Drug, Gamble's, Vanderwil & Yarnell, Avery's and others continues at a brisk pace.

At the southeast corner of the square, Pete from Pershing, with his infectious laughter and chatter, hawks his goodies. A jumble of sounds rises and

intermingles over the streets. The hum of conversations, laughter, shouts, car motors, and from the open doors of the taverns on Main Street, the blare of the jukeboxes rises to mix with dance music floating out of the windows of the Redmen's Hall.

From Tony's Tip Top Tavern, the beautiful strains of Glenn Miller's "Sierra Sue" seems to dominate for a few minutes, then is lost in the thicket of sounds. At intervals, from the Redmen's Hall, the strident voice of the square dance caller can be heard guiding the swaying, strutting, laughing dancers through their intricate maneuvers.

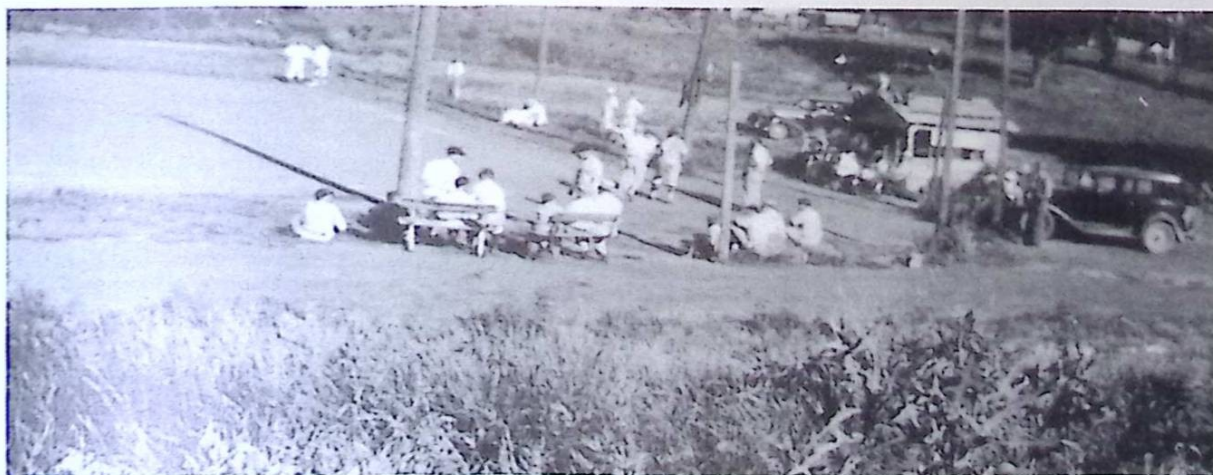
The worries of the Great Depression and toils of the week are forgotten. When the movies let out, many patrons head for the eating places for a sandwich and drink before heading home. Milner's Cafe, Little Cafe, Knoxville Cafe, Jones Cafe and other are busy.

Clerks in the grocery stores have been busy putting up orders for late-comers who had dropped the orders off and hurried to the movies. By midnight, the orders have been picked up, the crowd around the square has diminished to a few and most business places are closed.

Some of the merchants and others will form a small caravan of cars loaded with weary people and refreshments and head for the Harvey sand-pit. There, a fine sandy beach and clear water will provide the setting for swimming and partying. It has been a long hot week.

Epilogue

Saturday night, July 1992, 9:00 p.m. - only a few cars are parked on the square. No young couples stroll the sidewalks. Powerful lights accentuate the beauty of the courthouse in a quietness broken periodically by the roar of race car motors wafting in over the sites once occupied by the Redmen's Hall and Tony's Tip Top Tavern.



A BASEBALLBIT – The Harvey Indies semipro baseball team arriving at Auld Park to play Knoxville, circa 1939-1940.

Depression Diversions

One of the more scarier aspects of the Great Depression was the disappearance and scarcity of money in the United States. In 1931, gold was leaving the country at the rate of \$30 million a day. Frightened people hoarded paper money and coins at the rate of \$25 million daily. A fifth of all money in circulation, a billion dollars, disappeared in September and October of 1931.

Some people were forced to use the barter system. Some towns issued their own scrip. A farmer near Harvey paid some of his help with eggs, butter and milk, and stores took similar produce and chickens in payment for groceries.

Under these conditions, there was very little money left for diversions. Conditions were extremely difficult during the cold winter months. However, the Great Depression seemed to draw the people together in a unity that was not normally present. Consequently, life did not stop and people made do.

A couple of times a month, the word would go out that the so-and-so's were having a dance at their house. Furniture would be moved out of one or two rooms, and people young and old would gather in anticipation of an evening of visiting, music, dancing and fun.

The house would literally shake on its foundation as the dancers tripped through the intricate maneuvers of the square dance.

A veteran caller, Al Wilson or Ned Benscoter, in a loud, droning, rhythmic type of voice would call out instructions which included words such as "do-si-do," "alleman' left," "bounce and swing," "promenade," etc. If dancers missed the call, eager hands helped straighten them out.

Newcomers to square dancing provided a lot of amusement for onlookers. Depression woes were temporarily forgotten as sounds of laughter and gaiety filled the room. As youngsters became sleepy, they were "bundled" on a bed in a back bedroom where they were picked up after the dance. There were stories of parents picking up the wrong child and not realizing it until they got home.

Drinking? Some dancers might step outside occasionally to sample someone's homemade wine or home brew. I don't recall a major ruckus at a house dance.

The local high school was the focal point of many activities, such as basketball games, plays, etc. PTA meetings and programs were monthly affairs with students participating in the programs.

One event that created a lot of excitement and interest was the box supper special. Women, young and old, would prepare food for two and pack it

in colorfully and cleverly decorated boxes. The box would be covertly taken to the gym where it would be auctioned off. The buyer then had the pleasure of dining with the lady who had prepared the box.

The men were not supposed to know to whom the boxes belonged, but information both true and false was purposely and inadvertently leaked out. As a result, after spirited bidding, some men were forced to pay a premium and got to eat with their lady friend, while others paid a premium but didn't get to eat with their chosen one.

Harvey was one of the weekly stops on the traveling picture show circuit. A weekly drawing for \$5 created excitement, especially when it went unclaimed for several weeks. Twenty-five dollars seemed like a small fortune. People had to scratch to come up with the 10 or 20 cents for admission.

Groups would gather in homes to play cards. Hearts, pitch and rummy were the favorites. Boy-girl card playing groups would often end the evening with a prolonged game of post office.

Radio helped to shorten long winter evenings for those who were fortunate to have one. Those who had a radio had a lot of company in the evenings.

I suspect all of this sounds a little corny to the younger generations, but it helped us cope with hardships of the times. Andrew Mellon, a millionaire and Secretary of the Treasury under President Hoover, was supposed to have said, "A depression might be just what the country needs."

I must admit that I feel that way sometimes when I see and read of the excesses in our country. I feel that way only briefly, for I would not want our country to experience another Great Depression. Then again, maybe a small sample might change some people's attitudes and sense of values to the betterment of the country. It would be a hard lesson.



A WARBIT – Number One Ki-Ki patrol with native carriers deep into the New Britain rain forest where giant bats, large iguanas and exotic birds were often sighted.

The Winter of '36

Mother Nature hit this part of Iowa with a triple whammy in the mid-1930s. A scorching drought in 1934, a miserable winter in 1935-36 and a burning drought in 1936, plus the miseries of the Great Depression, had folks crying "enough!"

Most old timers will agree that the winter of 1935-36 was the "worst." From January 15th to February 20th, Iowa had its coldest period in the state's history. During that time, two blizzards, on January 23rd and February 8th, howled across Iowa already reeling from the bitter cold. The storms deposited snow in drifts that closed most roads and covered telephone poles in some areas.

Snow removal equipment then was primitive compared to today's powerful plows, blowers, etc. Road crews struggled long hours to keep primary roads open while folks on secondary roads remained snowbound or dug themselves out by hand. We would open the road from the Island into Harvey with shovels only to have it drift shut during the night. The road from old Highway 2 into Harvey was single lane in many places through drifts with snow piled 10 to 12 feet high on both sides.

The paralyzing cold and heavy snow created a shortage of coal in Des Moines where many homes, apartment houses and business places depended on coal trucked in from mines in the Marion, Monroe, and Appanoose county areas. There were times when the highway into Des Moines was impassable even though besieged snow removal crews worked round the clock. Lines of loaded coal trucks, like army convoys, followed snow removal crews as they worked laboriously to open the road. Coal supplies in Des Moines dwindled until some users were without.

During the shortage, Dwight Daugherty and I signed on with Babe Visser, a Harvey trucker. Our job was to help load the truck at the strip mine and unload it when we reached our destination in Des Moines. It was important to get the truck loaded and unloaded as quickly as possible and get back to the strip mine southwest of Harvey where we joined the line of waiting haulers. It was a continuous operation with no regular interruptions for rest and food. At the mine, if we were lucky, we would await our turn around the stove in the mine shack where truckers sat and sprawled on the dusty dirty floor.

The air in the mine shack reeked with the smell of tobacco smoke, unwashed bodies and flatus. The coming and going of the truckers prevented any meaningful rest and sleep. When the shack was full, we huddled together in the truck cab trying without much success to keep warm. The waiting sometimes stretched into hours.

Once loaded, we headed for Des Moines, stopping briefly to eat at a cafe on the north side of the Knoxville square. There were occasions when we entered the east side of Des Moines and were met by people along the street with buckets, tubs and other containers and wanting to buy small quantities of our coal. Most of our coal went to apartment houses on West Grand Avenue.

On our way back to the mine, we would again stop at the cafe to eat and buy sandwiches to take with us to tide us over while we waited at the mine. I recall eating a lot of chili. We followed this routine for a week or ten days. We had no regular and nourishing meals, no change of clothing, never shaved, never bathed and had only fitful and interrupted periods of sleep.

One morning as we were unloading the truck, I took my turn with the scoop shovel. After about five minutes of shoveling, my knees buckled and I slumped to the floor of the truck box. I had been T-kayoed by exhaustion. That incident ended our marathon coal hauling and we went home for some rest.

A much welcomed spring arrived and crops got off to an excellent start. Then, according to the *Des Moines Register*, "the hottest, the most uncomfortable, the downright deadliest summer," descended upon us. Prolonged periods of over 100 degree weather tortured Iowans and burned the crops. Iowa weather can be fickle.



After a 75 year existence, fire destroyed this covered bridge over English Creek between Durham and Harvey. The bridge was once a landmark for fishermen, hunters, ice skaters, mushroom hunters and swimmers.

A Day in the Cut

For downright drudgery and gross discomfort, loading coal into trucks by hand at the strip mines in the 1930s ranks first in my book.

Out of bed much before dawn and after a very substantial breakfast of sausage, fried potatoes, biscuits and gravy, I leave home on the Island east of Harvey and walk with Murray Milledge up the Rock Island track to meet Merle Douglas on Harvey's Main Street. We will drive to Ben Gholson's strip mine southeast of Knoxville.

The weather is bitterly cold and gusting winds kick up the snow that covers the ground. This means that trucks will be lined up and waiting at the mine.

As we near the mine, we can see the lights on the big dragline that runs 24 hours a day removing the dirt and slate that covers the vein of coal. This removal results in a canyon-like defile some 30 to 50 feet deep and 50 to 75 feet wide, which is referred to as the "cut."

We are in the cut at the face of the coal vein at 7 a.m., ready to load the big trucks that have backed up to the 3 to 4 foot vein of coal. The coal had been loosened by explosives the day before and we attack it with picks, pry bars, wedges and sledge hammers to loosen it further so we can load it into the rear of the trucks.

A cacophony of sounds fill the cut. The dragline motor roars incessantly, its big bucket chains clank and rattle and the screech of metal on metal pierces the air. Jack hammers chatter and air compressors snort and throb as holes are drilled into stubborn slate, which must be blasted loose.

Vertical holes are being drilled into the coal vein. They will be charged with blasting powder.

When all of the loose coal is cleaned up, the cut will be cleared of men and trucks and the charges detonated. Overnight, two or three inches of water and slush has accumulated at the face of the coal vein, and we strive to keep our mittens dry as we use the frosty tools and lift the big chunks of coal into the trucks.

We work in pairs. One shovels right-handed, the other left-handed. In loading a load of "lump" coal, we use a coal fork to load the smaller pieces. The coal fork allows the slack, or fine coal, to fall through to the ground. For "mine run" we use a shovel and the fine coal goes into the load.

To add to our discomfort, cold winds swirl down the cut, whipping up a mixture of fine dirt and snow which stings our faces and punishes our eyes.

The activity at the face of the coal vein is constant as we pick, pry, pound, shovel, fork and manhandle large chunks of coal up and into the

truck beds. As the load is rounded out at the rear of the bed, we lift the coal to heights over our heads at times.

The sight of a short wheel-based truck pulling into the cut brings forth curses from the unlucky pair that has to load it because the coal will have to be thrown very high as the 5-ton load is rounded out.

For a short while, no trucks show up and we get on top of the vein and use shovels to clean off the overburden that the dragline bucket could not pick up. Just before noon, several trucks pull in and we have to eat our lunches on the run. We make a quick trip to the scale house where we gulp down cold sandwiches, a wedge of pie and hot coffee, exchange our wet mittens for dry ones and hasten back to the cut.

For the rest of the day there is no letup in the activity. Trucks in. Trucks out. Drill. Blast. Load.

Around 4:00 in the afternoon we anxiously survey the situation. We hope to quit at 5 p.m. We luck out as the last truck, a late-comer, is set on by all the coal heavers and is soon loaded and on its way.

Back in Harvey, Murray and I, dog-tired, walk down the track to our homes. Refreshed by a hot bath in a galvanized wash tub and a welcome meal of corn bread, ham and beans, I walk back to Harvey and play in a semi-pro basketball game between the Harvey Indies and the Pleasantville Owls.

There is the possibility of a date after the game, but my better judgment prevails and I wearily trudge down the tracks to home.

Four-thirty will roll around much too soon. I don't exactly look forward to tomorrow, but we are in the middle of the Great Depression and a job paying 30 cents an hour, \$3 a day and \$18 a week isn't to be sneezed at.



The "cut"

A Depression Morning

It is five-thirty in the morning on a bitterly cold day in late February, 1933. The snow-laden north wind that snarled around our house most of the night has abated. It is frigidly cold in the small bedroom occupied by me and my brothers in the small house on the bank of the Des Moines River east of the little town of Harvey, Iowa. Reaching out from the pocket of warmth captured under layers of quilts, I feel the snow that has settled on the window sill. The loose-fitting window sash has been no match for the fierce wind and snow.

I have been awakened by the sound of my mother's footsteps on the living room floor linoleum as she moved toward the big Round Oak heating stove to begin the ritual that will launch our family into another uncertain day in the Great Depression. The evening before, the gusting wind had nosed through the gaps in the hollow tile foundation and up through the cracks in the floor and periodically raised the linoleum. As it rose and fell, it was jokingly referred to as the 'breathing linoleum.'

The opening stove door squeaks and the poker bangs against the stove metal as she pokes and stirs the smoldering mound of wood and coal. The fire had been banked the night before. The clank of the coal bucket handle is followed by the clatter of the coal tumbling from the bucket onto the bed of coals. The damper rasps when it is opened and that signals a rush of air up through the coals and out the chimney. The fire roars a challenge to the bone-chilling cold that pervades the house. The crackling of the fire assures that the stove will soon be a cherry red.

Mom's footsteps are louder now crossing the wooden floor of the kitchen and the other occupants of the bedroom stir and yawn. There is no school today and still weary from last night's high school basketball game, I relish the luxury of sleeping in.

Mentally, I count one, two, three as the two stove lids and the divider are lifted from the old Majestic range. The stuttering clank of the lid lifter and raking on the grates means the ashes and dead coals are being raked into the ash pan below. The corn cobs I had gathered the evening before rustle as they are poured from the wooden box into the stove. Anticipating the next sound, I become apprehensive and silently fret over the possibility of an explosion. The cap turning on the coal oil can spout squeaks and the splatter of coal oil onto the coal and cobs heightens my anxiety. There have been stories of people being burned. Anxiously, I hear the scratch of the match and the almost simultaneous poof of the coal oil igniting. The clanging of the lids being replaced signals all is well and I breathe a sigh of relief. The range will do double duty - help warm the house and cook our breakfast.

The clinking of the granite dipper breaking the layer of ice in the water bucket is followed by the sloshing of water pouring from the bucket into the iron teakettle. The teakettle had been emptied the night before. Water freezing in the teakettle might crack it.

My mind's eye watches my mother cross the linoleum floor toward the battery-operated radio sitting in the corner of the living room. It is a financial struggle to keep the radio operating but it is our main source of entertainment and contact with current events. Soon the voice of Grandpa Jones singing, "Whispering Hope," fills the living room and spills softly into our bedroom. When he finishes, the announcer identifies the station as WWVA, Wheeling, West Virginia. It is cold in West Virginia too. The drone of the announcer's voice, selling Peruna, garden seeds and other products, intermingles with more music and drifts in and out of my semi-sleep state.

My mother sits quietly by the heater warming herself as she waits for hot water from the slowly heating teakettle so she can wash her hands soiled by the firebuilding. I cringe inwardly as I envision her hands, already red, chafed, cracked and sore from washing clothes on the washboard, using the cruel lye soap and then hanging them outside in freezing weather. Grandpa Jones is singing, "The Old Rugged Cross." This will bring tears to my mother's eyes. It will revive memories of my eleven-year-old brother's death about a year ago. The soloist sang it at his funeral. His death and the Depression have taken a toll of my parents.

Back in the kitchen, she washes and prepares to cook the first meal of the day. There follows a series of sounds - some in sequence and some intermingled. The grating of the flour sifter and the plop of dough onto the table means baking powder biscuits. The rhythmic perk of the coffee pot is punctured by the pat - pat - pat of sausage patties being formed. They sizzle when they are placed in the big iron skillet for browning. The meat of the hog butchered last week and the canned fruits and vegetables in the cellar help us cope with the severe shortage of money. Our cow provides us with milk and butter but money is needed to buy her hay. Only after the creak of the oven door and the screech of the biscuit pan sliding into the oven does mom walk to the other bedroom door and call my dad, "The biscuits are in - time to get up."

She has let him sleep as long as possible for he will walk a mile in the snow and cold into Harvey. He and some other men have pooled their money to buy gasoline for one with a car for a trip to Knoxville, the county seat. They are going there to apply for relief. They hope the relief will be a county order with which they can buy some staples, fuel and medicines. They are proud men - miners and factory workers. To ask for a county order will be a blow to their pride. My dad has been quiet and moody the past few weeks. Asking for relief is a last resort.

The sounds become more confused as dad prepares for breakfast. The radio is louder now and has been tuned to another station. The announcer identifies the new station, "This is W-H-O, Who? The Bankers Life Station in Des Moines, Iowa." The clang of silverware and clatter of china periodically interrupts the flow of WHO news. The names of Roosevelt and Hoover dominate - ten degrees below zero in Des Moines - more banks have failed - unemployment continues to rise - farmers are burning corn to keep warm - desperate men line up at soup kitchens in Chicago - inauguration plans are nearly completed - farmers armed with shotguns try to protect their land against foreclosure - a man named Adolph Hitler has seized power in Germany - bankruptcies increase - a farm auction in Iowa has been disrupted by angry farmers. I think of my graduating in the spring and my future. These are worrisome times for all.

The radio is silent as they eat breakfast. Tiny bits of their conversation carry into our room. What I hear conveys the worries that beset them - groceries - more coal - hay for the cow - county order - more wood - funeral bill - shoes - rent money - hope with Roosevelt. In spite of the snow and cold, I plan to go hunting. Rabbits will supplement our larder. The murmur of their voices lull me back into a deep sleep.

* * * * *



RIVERRATBIT—Author (L) and pal Joe Bryant, standing on wooden plank approach of ford across the old Des Moines riverbed. They have raised their wire fish trap securing it from the threat of rising water which will make the ford unusable. This will deprive the islanders of vehicle traffic across the river unless they use the railroad bridge which some will do.

Down on the Levee

Recent news stories and pictures of downpours and flooding took me back to the days of high waters and flooding on the island east of Harvey. In 1844, Andrew Foster built a dam and sawmill at the confluence of the Des Moines River and English Creek, near what is now the town of Harvey. The sawmill produced the lumber to build the first courthouse in Knoxville. The dam and sawmill were washed away by the great flood of 1857.

In 1903, one of the most destructive floods in the annals of Marion County occurred. It swept away a span of the Wabash railroad bridge and carried it downstream, where it struck the Rock Island railroad bridge and knocked it off its piers. The 1947 flood waters breached the Rock Island railroad embankment and formed a vast lake over all of the island. The Des Moines River was fickle and the islanders were aware of its treachery, its violence, its unfaithfulness as well as its serenity and generosity. It was an ever-present gamble when island farmers put in their crops.

The river was not particular as to the time of year it wreaked destruction on the land, buildings and crops. High water in the winter broke up the ice, which in turn jammed behind the bridges, threatening to destroy them.



Flood waters around our home on the island.

High explosives were sometimes used to break up the ice and driftwood jams. Sometime in the early part of the century, a dirt levee was constructed around the lower part of the upper island. It was like a giant horseshoe with its ends being connected by the Rock Island railroad embankment.

In the 1920s and '30s, farmers did not have the benefit of high-tech weather forecasting. Islanders had little information on possible flooding. Flash flooding from heavy downpours upstream were a constant threat. Overnight, the river would burst out of its banks, spread over the island and then almost immediately recede into its banks. This resulted in fish being stranded in shallow holes. I once found a very large carp completely out of water and still wriggling. Others found shallow holes teeming with fish.

One summer, after a long dry spell, a torrential downpour upstream

turned the river into a muddy, roily current. It was so muddy that the fish were swimming with their mouths out of the water in order to breathe! We literally scooped them onto the bank with shovels.

With the river rising and threatening to overflow, the farmers marshalled their forces to fight back. People were organized to patrol the top of the levee to look for leaks and vulnerable low spots. Horses hitched to loaded slips stood by should large amounts of dirt be needed. Youngsters were pressed into service to carry food and drink to weary levee walkers.

One nemesis of the farmers were the burrowing animals such as ground-hogs, gophers and skunks, that took up residency in the levee. Water would enter the burrows and go through the levee or weaken it, thus allowing the water to seep through and eventually pour through.

It was touch and go as the water inched toward the top of the levee. Stakes with markings were set to check the rate the water was rising. Throughout the night, the bobbing lights of the kerosene lanterns around the large horseshoe evidenced the presence of oft-times rain-soaked levee walkers. It was a heartbreaking time when the river, like a vengeful army, won the battle and poured out onto the fields and surrounded the buildings.

To my knowledge, there was no government aid in the 1920s, and little if any in the 1930s. In 1947, I stood on the railroad embankment and watched the water flow through the windows of the little house that had once been our home. The small cow barn, the outhouse, a coal house I had built, and the chicken house Dad and I had built had been swept away.

The river, at flood stage, was a formidable foe to be reckoned with, but it has been tamed somewhat by the Red Rock Dam. However, in a more subtle and leisurely way, the river continues to eat away at the upper island. It does not give up easily.

* * * * *



A W.C. BIT – Upon Zap's death, our trio became a duo. Jones and I grew closer. Bob Wills' "San Antonio Rose" was our song. We hardened to combat as buddies met violent deaths. When we withdrew from Hill 600 at dusk we inadvertently left W.C., Ray and Harry behind in enemy territory. We dug in and I was shrouded in gloom until I heard W.C. call, "Gayree, where are you?" They had shot up a Jap patrol and escaped down the middle of a shallow river to our position. Later on, I would fret when he was wounded. We said tearful goodbyes when he left for Texas. He named his son Gary (Geery). We talk often by phone and "San Antonio Rose," still wafts from my downstairs retreat.

Old Jerz

(First in a series of three)

Staking the Cow

Upon reading the title of this piece, Dracula aficionados might think it is about a vampire cow, but it isn't.

When we moved from the country into Harvey, we brought Old Jerz, our fine milk cow, with us. In those days, it was not unusual for some folks in small towns to have a cow or some chickens, or maybe, a pig or two or a goat. Food from any source was a boon during the Depression. Old Jerz kept us supplied with milk and enough butter to permit us to sell some occasionally.

The responsibility for staking out Old Jerz fell on my 11-year-old shoulders. In other words, I found spots in vacant lots and abandoned roadways where there was grass and drove an iron stake, with a 50-foot chain attached, into the ground. The other end of the chain was fastened to her halter. Sometimes the spot was good for a full day of grazing, but by mid-summer, it was necessary to bring her to our house for water and then, find another grazing spot for the afternoon. Pretty routine you say? Well, most of the time, yes, but there were hazardous and embarrassing moments for this young herdsman.

There was competition with other families for grazing spots. Heated arguments ensued when someone felt their territory was being infringed upon. The railroad right of way provided excellent grazing but one had to make sure the cow didn't get too close to the track. I failed that requirement one day and incurred the wrath of the section foreman. Old Jerz couldn't get on the track but was much too close to suit him.

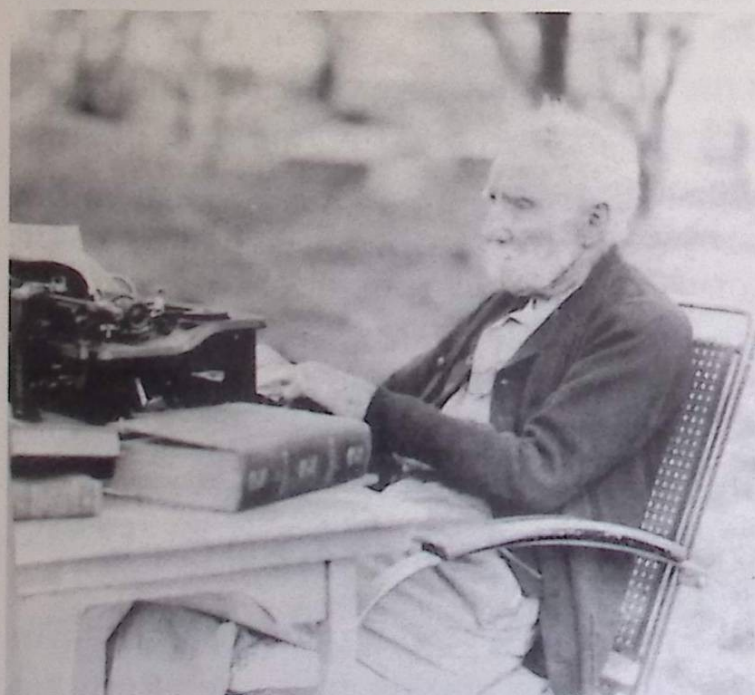
Dad cautioned me not to wrap the chain around my waist or hand when leading Old Jerz. The reason became apparent during the dog days of summer when the flies became most pestiferous. Many times, as I led her back to a new grazing spot after her noon watering, she would become so bothered by the flies that she would bolt and run. Down the road we would go with me holding onto the chain with both hands and my bare feet hitting the ground in ten foot strides. Finally, frustrated and helpless, I would let go of the chain and tearfully watch her disappear from view. My search would begin knowing that I would probably find her in someone's garden munching on their sweet corn. I prayed the people would not be home, and I could retrieve Old Jerz and get away without incident.

Seldom was I that fortunate and I received several tongue lashings from irate gardeners. After staking Old Jerz in a nice grazing spot one afternoon

and starting home, I heard a most distressful noise and looked back to see her running toward me at top speed and bawling up a storm. As she neared, I could see the cause of her distress. I had staked her near a bumblebees' nest and they were swarming around her head. The race was on! Down the road we ran neck and neck toward our house about three blocks away and pulled into our yard in a dead heat. We had shaken the bees but not before they had inflicted considerable pain on us.

Lewis Nichols staked out his family's cow when they lived in the coal mine camps. We agreed the following experience was one of life's most embarrassing moments. I must warn you that this experience has sexual overtones and you should proceed at your own discretion. My mother most always milked Old Jerz and I dreaded the time when she would announce that it was time to take Old Jerz to see the "gentleman cow," meaning Wade Harvey's bull. In that situation, because of her amorous mood, Old Jerz would become quite unruly. Consequently, Dad would lead her and I would follow behind with a switch. As we made our way across town, I stared straight ahead with face burning, because I knew everybody was watching us and knew where we were going and for what purpose. It was doubly embarrassing when we met grinning schoolmates and even more so, when the schoolmates were girls.

There was one other hazard which I learned about the hard way. One evening at milking time, it appeared that Old Jerz had eloped from her grazing spot. I found her in a strange place. That is another story which I will write if I get 25 requests—oh, well, five? Two? One?



A HARVEYBIT — Dr. W. H. H. Barker was an extraordinary man. He was a Civil War captain, physician, dentist, engineer and inventor. At age 64, he returned to Harvey and established an arboretum. He devoted the rest of his life to writing, collecting and planting a specimen of every tree and shrub native to Marion County. It was a familiar sight to see this 125-pound oldster trudging over the countryside gathering his trees and shrubs. On Armistice Day, he would come to school in his Civil War uniform and talk about his war experiences. Harvey's most distinguished citizen, he died November 8, 1940, at age 100.

Old Jerz

(Second in a series of three)

The Saga of Old Jerz

Most of you learned about Old Jerz in my recent essay on "Staking the Cow." I promised to write about her disappearing and being found in a very strange place if enough people requested me to do so. The response wasn't exactly overwhelming but five requests was sufficient motivation for me.

It didn't take a Sam Spade to find Old Jerz when it appeared she had eloped one evening. The predicament we found her in created a great deal of excitement, drama and consternation. I had staked Old Jerz a short distance from our house unaware of the danger lurking in the high grass and horseweeds covering the area.

At milking time, Mom called to me that Old Jerz was not where I had staked her. We found her chain still attached to the stake and stretched tautly on the ground. Following the chain through the grass and weeds, we came to where it disappeared into the opening of a concrete curbing of an abandoned well. Apprehensively, we peered into the gloom below and there, much to our horror, was Old Jerz! She had stepped across the opening with her front legs and into the opening with her hind legs and was now sitting on the bottom of the well some 15 to 20 feet below. There was no water in the well and we could see she was alive.

The thought of losing Old Jerz threw us into a state of panic and near shock! What a disaster! Mom's cries pierced the air like a siren as we ran to the house shouting the horrible news! As word of our trouble spread, a large and curious crowd gathered at the well site. Dad and my brother Bud were working out of town and could not be reached by telephone. Mom was almost hysterical and the rest of us felt helpless. What to do! What to do! The crowd continued to swell and would-be movie goers opted to watch the real live drama unfolding about three blocks from the show hall.

Fortunately, Lady Luck smiled upon us. A Wabash Railroad bridge gang was quartered in their bunk cars only a short distance from the well. Hearing the commotion, the foreman and some of his men came to see what was going on. Sizing up the situation, he took control and like an army officer barked out instructions to the many folks who wanted to help.

Men went to the Wabash bridge gang cars and secured equipment for the attempted rescue. In time, a tripod of small telephone poles was erected over the well opening. A heavy block and tackle was attached to the apex of the tripod.

Then came the next hurdle-how to get a rope around Old Jerz. Harold

Freeman volunteered and the crowd cheered as he was lowered into the well where he put a rope around Old Jerz immediately back of her front legs. Harold was hoisted out of the well and promptly collapsed. He had encountered the deadly black damps! He remained conscious but was very ill. Someone ran to fetch the doctor. Meanwhile, he was given copious amounts of black coffee. (Don't ask me. I don't know either.)

With the rope around Old Jerz, the stage was set for her rescue from the gloomy hole. A long line of men grasped the rope of the block and tackle and to the shouts of "heave ho" began to pull. Darkness was settling in and a hush fell over the crowd as a critical phase of Old Jerz's rescue attempt unfolded.

Will Old Jerz be rescued? Will she survive her traumatic experience? Read the conclusion of "The Saga of Old Jerz" in a later issue of the *Journal-Express*!

* * * * *

A RIVERRATBIT – "Hello, the house! Can we come ashore?" came the call through the twilight settling over the swollen river. "Come ahead!", I shouted from our porch some 30 yards from the river bank. My brother and I gave them an O.K. to camp in that area. We hung around as the two men cooked their supper over an open fire. They thanked us profusely for a gift of Mom's homemade bread. They told us they were WWI vets and on the way to Washington, D.C. to join the Bonus Expeditionary Force (BEF) made up of WWI vets who hoped to convince Congress to pay them the bonus they had earned. We sat with big ears as they related some of their war experiences. I tried to follow the activities of the BEF in Washington, but with little success. Some 20,000 vets set up a tent and shack city on Anacostia River flat. Congress adjourned without authorizing the bonus and at 10 A.M. on July 2, 1934, conflict and turmoil raged as vets clashed with police. At 3 P.M., President Hoover ordered the army into the battle. At 4 P.M., troops with tanks, fixed bayonets and tear gas routed the vets who were armed only with rocks. A journalist wrote of the one man who was killed, "They buried him with simple military honors, the penniless Chicago veteran, who lost his life in the strangest of all wars – the attempt to collect from the government the bonus he felt he was due." The commander of the forces that squashed the BEF was General Douglas MacArthur. We often wondered how our overnight guests made out.

Old Jerz

(Third in a series of three)

Old Jerz's Rescue

At the conclusion of "The Saga of Old Jerz," our old milk cow was about to be hoisted out of the abandoned well into which she had fallen. Now, for the conclusion.

The men on the block and tackle rope responded to the cries of "heave ho" and Old Jerz's head soon emerged from the well opening. This brought cheers and applause from the large crowd but the cheers soon changed to groans of dismay. The rope, now below Old Jerz's front legs, caused her legs to stick straight out and prevented her exit through the well opening! Slowly she was lowered back into the dark and dankness of the well while wails of grief arose from the Geery family huddled together nearby. Darkness came and kerosene lanterns were obtained and placed around the area.

The whole rescue operation seemed to be at an impasse. No one was anxious to descend into the well because of the damps. Someone said that hot coals would burn away the black damps. In a short while, a small bucket of hot coals was secured and lowered into the hole. Still, no one offered to go into the well again, and it was not clear what a person would do if they did.

The situation became very confusing and suggested solutions came from many sources. Someone suggested breaking up the curbing and removing it. It was concluded that would be too difficult and very dangerous to Old Jerz. At times it appeared that Old Jerz might just have to be left to her fate.

Finally, in desperation, it was suggested that a loop be dropped around Old Jerz's neck and that she be pulled out that way. The foreman of the helpful bridge gang made the decision to follow that course even though it would be a dangerous procedure. His decision was reinforced when "Yag" White appeared on the scene, and said he had just come from helping pull a horse out of a well by its neck. After several attempts, a non-strangling type of noose was dropped around Old Jerz's neck. I still have a vivid image of the ensuing event.

As the men pulled on the block and tackle rope, Old Jerz's head again emerged from the well opening and as her body followed, it seemed to me that her neck was six feet long. One could imagine they were witnessing a hanging as she momentarily hung suspended from the tripod. In the eerie light of the kerosene lanterns it was a most grotesque sight and our family wailed as we thought we were witnessing the demise of Old Jerz. There was no cheering. The crowd looked on in silence, stunned by the gruesome scene unfolding.

Old Jerz was slowly lowered to the ground beside the well curbing, where she lay stretched out and lifeless for what seemed an eternity. The crowd stood by mutely in anticipation of what might follow. Then, ever so slowly, Old Jerz raised her head, raised up on her hind legs and then up on her front legs to stand rather wobbly at center stage. Cheers erupted from the crowd. Men shook hands and women hugged each other. We cried some more.

Old Jerz came through her ordeal with only some severe lacerations which healed satisfactorily. She, apparently, was not affected by the black damps. Harold Freeman recovered from his encounter with the black damps and suffered no ill effects.

When it became unfeasible for us to keep Old Jerz, she was sold to Guy Morris. I watched him lead her away down the road where the bumble bees had chased us. I thought she turned and looked back a couple of times, but it was difficult for me to tell. Dust, pollen, or something or another kept getting in my eyes and I couldn't see too clearly.

* * * * *

A WARBIT – At the sound of a Jap 4.2 mortar being fired, we scrambled into our foxholes to await the horrendous sound and geysers of metal, rocks, dirt and smoke when they exploded in and around our perimeter. Three visiting battalion officers took refuge in the nearest vacant holes. One of them dove into Ray's hole and he was forced to take cover elsewhere. The firing ceased and then came that dreaded call, "Medic! Medic!". I crawled to where a medic, Earl Lemke of Grinnell, was examining a horribly mutilated body of a GI and located his dog tags. It was Ray. Had he been in his own hole he would have been alive. "War is all hell!" said General Sherman. I would add, "and should be fought by the generals and politicians."

Sports



The starting eleven of the 160th Infantry football team from left to right: Corp. J. Herbert, RE; Corp. M. Wollis, RT; Sgt. C. Abel, RG; Corp. M. Teodo, C; Pfc. T. Rogers, LG; Pfc. W. Geery, LT and Sgt. L. Collins, LE. Backfield men, left to right are: Pfc. A. Haproff, RH; Pvt. R. Andrade, LH; Pfc. C. Garlinghouse, FB and Pfc. L. Nye, QB.

Sports

	Page
They Loved the Game!	91
Base-brawl at Liberty Center	93
Pop to the Rescue	95
An Old Pog Remembers	97
Raspberries Are Costly	99
'I Was A Football Hero'	101
Gym Dandies They Weren't	103
The Pros Come to Town	105
A DHCF	107
Baseball, Fried Chicken & Big John	109
The Long and Short of It	111
The Harvey Olympics	113



1946 Baseball Team

Front row, left to right: Paul Holdsworth, Merlyn Ward, Shorty White and Park Lundy. Back row, left to right: Bud Geery, Swede Lundy, Whity Shobe (Mgr.), Bob Harvey, Bob Barnett and Woody Geery.

They Loved the Game!

Today, football games are played on well maintained fields by athletes wearing scientifically designed equipment including hard plastic helmets, face guards, mouth pieces, bulky shoulder pads, knee braces and other gear that provides the ultimate in protection. It is a far cry from the conditions that existed at a game I watched one Sunday afternoon in the late fall of 1935.

A fine mist of rain fell on my brother Bud, Dwight Daugherty and I as we hunkered behind the windshield of a topless Model T Ford as we left Harvey to make our way over slippery roads towards Pershing. Our destination was a football field laid out on the south side of the highway about a mile west of the Pershing corner. There, the Pershing Pirates were scheduled to meet the Valley Junction Tigers in a semi-pro football game. My brother Bud was in between years at Central College where he had donned a football uniform for the first time and lettered his freshman and sophomore years. A fine all-around, powerful athlete noted for his bruising play as a defensive tackle, he was tagged "the Harvey coal heaver" because of his having worked in the strip mines around Harvey.

At the field, he would join other members of the team coming from the Attica, Pershing, Bussey and Knoxville area. Some would arrive in uniform having dressed at home. My brother and others would dress in a cold drafty room at the nearby filling station. Their uniforms were hand-me-downs from defunct high school programs and cast-offs from nearby colleges. Skimpy leather helmets and padding, ankle high shoes with wedge-shaped leather cleats and baggy khaki pants provided a minimum of protection. White sweatshirts with no numbers covered fragile looking (by today's standards) shoulder pads.

The all-night rain had ceased but the very unlevel field was dotted with numerous puddles of water of varying sizes and depths. Goal posts of new two-by-fours legitimized the field in this most unlikely place.

The Valley Junction Tigers' arrival created quite a stir among the fans gathered along the sidelines. Decked out in black and orange shirts and matching stockings, they made the bare-legged, sweat-shirted Pershing team look a little like the ill assorted guard.

I remember three other players on the Pershing team that day: two big talented athletes, Bubber Gott and Harlan Plum, and a gutsy little quarterback, Tom Wignall. Many in the crowd were from Pershing and had never seen a football game and were totally perplexed by what was taking place on the field. One older gentleman, obviously of foreign extraction, would periodically question just what constituted a "gool."

Naturally, I followed the play of my brother and still have a vivid image of him consistently bending a Valley Junction halfback double with crunching shoulder tackles. A story emerged that late in the game when the Valley Junction halfback was called on to try their left again, he rebelled and told the quarterback, "If you want the ball to go that way, you carry it!" He had taken enough punishment from the "Harvey coal heaver!"

Recalling the Pershing semi-pro team of the middle '30s evokes other names such as Barney and Casey Neifert, Tom Rowland, Frank Miller, Fred Holdsworth, "Tumpy" Miller, Jim Nichols and others whose names are not known to me. One Pershing team, behind the passing of "Bid" Long, played the powerful Daniels Brothers Tire Company team on even terms at Des Moines before succumbing 14-0.

Those semi-pro football players were a hardy lot. They held no team practices. Plays were made up in the huddle. They played both ways. Substitutes were in short supply and substitutions were infrequent. No ankles were taped and there was no team doctor or trainer to tend to injuries. Adhesive tapes were used to patch up both players and uniforms. No bands played and no cheerleaders strutted the sidelines. Few, if any, had health insurance. They received no money and provided their own transportation to the games. There were no hot showers awaiting them after the game. Most would go home and bathe their bruised and battered bodies in a galvanized washtub by the kitchen range. Next day they would go back to their jobs in the mines, driving truck, etc. What motivated them? My answer is pure and simple, "They loved the game!"

Who won the game? I don't know. With fingers crossed I have composed a sports headline that did not appear anywhere, "Pershing Downs Valley Junction As Plum Grabs Wignall's Last Minute Pass for Winning Touchdown." I couldn't think of a better way to end this story.

* * * * *

A SPORTSBIT – I saw my first football game, Tracy High vs. Bussey High, played on a sun-baked, sparsely sodded field east of the Tracy gym. Uniforms were skimpily padded, skimpy leather helmets had no face guards. What players lacked in finesse they made up for with spirit and grit. I visualize two players, workhorses Harlan Plum, Bussey and Kelly Jones, Tracy. "Here comes Nagurski!", shouted the Tracy players as they converged on Plum in a dusty, noisy encounter. Sweeping his right end, Kelly leveled by a shoestring tackle, sprawled face first into the unyielding turf. His face resembled raw hamburger. And they played both ways!

Base-brawl at Liberty Center

I was watching a major league baseball game on TV recently when the batter charged the pitcher and a brawl ensued. As usual, I began to berate the participants with language I usually reserve for Washington politicians. From an adjoining room came the voice of my wife, "Hold it, Woody! Remember Liberty Center!" That put an end to my rantings.

I would like to blame the incident on the dog days of summer, but it took place on a cool day in September 1940. (I have the scorebook.) In April, we beat the Liberty Center semipro baseball team six to two at Harvey. They came to Harvey again in July and we rallied for eight runs in the eighth inning to beat them again 11 to eight.

There was an extra dimension to this rivalry. One of their players was my older brother Bud, who taught and coached at Liberty Center High School. He was a fine baseball player and a sportsman.

In September, most of the team and several fans rode to Liberty Center in the back of a truck to play a doubleheader. I think our come-from-behind victory had stuck in the craws of the Liberty Center players and they were anxious to get us on their field.



Game at diamond south of school-house.

The first game was a lackluster affair with us on the short end of a seven to three score. We committed five costly errors and our bats were so ineffective that even the fine pitching of Big John Barnett could not prevail. The mood of our team became one of frustration as we popped up, grounded out and booted the ball around. Justified or not, we began taking our frustrations out on the local umpires.

Howe, the first base umpire, was the father of one of the Liberty Center players and two young men in the crowd. Our frustrations carried over into the second game and tensions mounted when my brother Don and Ray Holdsworth were plunked in the ribs by pitched balls. All close plays at first base seemed to go against us (a biased view of course), and our bench jockeys were giving umpire Howe a bad time.

In the top of the fifth, trailing one to zero, Bill Hegwood walked and was picked off first. This brought howls of protest from our bench as we claimed their pitcher had balked. One could feel the atmosphere becoming charged as the Liberty Center crowd got into the act.

This was the situation when my young brother, Don, a husky, mature 16-year-old, stepped to the plate. He was an outstanding baseball player and would be offered a professional contract after World War II.

He also had a bit of a temper. He hit a slow roller to short and we thought he had beaten the throw, but Umpire Howe called him out. Don returned to first and the sparks flew as he went face to face with the umpire in a blistering exchange of some very uncomplimentary remarks.

Suddenly the verbal battle exploded into a fist swinging exchange. A full scale donnybrook erupted as the benches cleared and the Howe boys rushed to aid their father.

I ran to help Don, who was being worked over by the Howes. One had an arm lock on his head and another was pummeling his face. My immediate objective was to rescue him, but I was being pushed, poked, held and shoved in the milling scuffling crowd. I helped Don get free and had one of the Howe boys in a bear hug. I was still pretty much under control, and tried to get him to 'cool it.' He agreed to. I let him go and turned to continue my peacekeeping efforts as the fracas seemed to abate a little.

That was a mistake! Whack! He hit me in the back of the head and I went sprawling face down, spread-eagled in the dust of the diamond. This reignited the melee and the brawl swirled around and over me. The sucker punch was too much! I lost my temper, got to my feet, discarded my peacekeeping role and went on the offensive.

Frankly, I didn't remember too much after that until the free-for-all ran its course. I do have a vivid memory of our salty old manager, "Steamboat Bill" Williams, pacing back and forth and angrily repeating, "I wish I had a 38 (caliber)."

It is laughable now, but it wasn't then because feelings and emotions were out of control. Several people gathered assorted bruises that day. The next day I was mystified by the numerous sore spots on my arms. I concluded they were caused from being stepped on as I lay sprawled face down in the midst of the fray. My heavy sweatshirt had prevented any lacerations from the spikes.

Did the Geery brothers exchange blows? No. It was a frustrating and embarrassing affair for my brother, the coach and sportsman. However, no long-lasting enmities resulted from the event. Bud played with Harvey during the 1941 season. Jim Howe and I became good friends while working at the VA Hospital.

Anytime a group of old Harvey semipro players and their families get together, the incident at Liberty Center is relived and rehashed, with individual embellishments and variations of course, for the younger generations. Now about those big league brawlers, if I had my way I'd - whoops!

Pop to the Rescue

I recently watched our church team play another church team in a game of slow pitch, girl-boy softball on the Attica field. As I watched the game, I recalled the games our M & W fast pitch team played with Attica on the same field some 40 years go.

During the Depression in the '30s, softball teams sprang up all over Marion County. There were teams in every hamlet. In areas where there was no town, the teams were identified by names such as Pinchy, Sunnyside, Eureka, Amsterdam and Teeter Creek. It seemed as though every proverbial "wide spot in the road" had a softball team. It was a great source of diversion for the Depression-weary populace. Most games were played in the evening or on Sunday. Few lighted fields were in existence at that time.



Crowd at Sunday baseball game in the Bill Dennis pasture.

In Harvey, we were baseball purists and looked down our noses at that other game often referred to as "kitten ball." How could a game played with an oversized ball thrown underhand and having a 10th player called the "galloping goose" possibly compare with baseball, the great American pastime?

It wasn't until I was in the Army and saw some of the top-notch, fast pitch softball players from the metropolitan areas of Chicago, St. Louis, New York and Los Angeles that I began to appreciate the skills and abilities possessed by quality softball players. I became a believer when I saw a pudgy small-handed pitcher snap off wicked curves with a softball and a strapping Polish boy from Chicago throw bullet-like rising fastballs. There were a lot of high quality softball players in the Army and that is why I managed our E Company team. In the South Pacific, once an area was secured, softball equipment came out of the supply tent, bulldozers leveled off some ground among the palm groves and teams clashed in fierce competition with considerable wagering among their supporters.

After World War II, softball again dominated the sports scene in this area. The ball became harder and the "galloping goose" or short fielder was eliminated. Players were merged into fewer teams which resulted in several very

good teams with fine talent. This area had its own "field of dreams" when a diamond was carved out of a cornfield at Belinda. Large crowds gathered at Belinda to watch them play arch rivals Attica and M & W Clothiers. With hard throwing Junior Nichols on the mound they were hard to beat. I played some with the M & W Clothiers, a team led by hard-hitting Noel Whisler and two pitchers, Sherm Brown and Bill Slickers. Slickers moved to South Dakota and led his team to a state championship. Attica had a fine team, featuring Bill Bennet, an exceptional pitcher. Later on Abie Davis hurled outstanding ball for Attica. All of the major teams played under the lights and large and enthusiastic crowds gathered to watch their heroes play. Professional teams toured the area. An all-black team played a team of all-stars at Auld Park before an overflow crowd. The Greenwood Electric all-girls team played a team of men at Auld Park. I umpired the game and marveled at the skill of a pint-sized catcher with a rifle arm.

The games at Attica were most memorable for me as we ached to beat Bill Bennet. But it was not to be. Sherm Brown would be at his best against Attica, but they would inevitably score a run in the late innings to beat us. This is probably not factual but that is what it seemed like to me. My major accomplishment against Bennet was a long foul ball one night. It was an afternoon tournament game at Attica, M & W versus Centerville, a team managed by flamboyant Benny Beloma, a good friend of John McConville and Whisler (M & W). A consequence of this was some pretty heavy betting by the friendly rivals. A crisis arose when Sherm Brown failed to show up. Noel and John were beside themselves—bets were down and no pitcher!

But wait! In the crowd was a veteran pitcher of the 1930s. Lyle "Pop" Langebartels came out of retirement to pitch for us. I was catching and Pop's tantalizing slow stuff frustrated the Centerville batters who hit a lot of long foul balls. In the end, Pop's canny pitching and our timely hitting produced a victory. Ironically, Pop ran Langebartels Clothing store, a business rival of M & W. Wagers were duly collected and John McConville and I replayed the game over a cold one or two at the West End Tavern that evening. A man gets mighty thirsty playing softball on a hot afternoon.

The Belinda "field of dreams" is being farmed now and the Attica field has a tired and weary look about it and few fast pitch softball teams compete these days.

An Old Pug Remembers

A recent newspaper story about the Des Moines Golden Gloves boxing tourney revived memories, some of them painful, of my abbreviated career in the squared circle.

Pro and amateur boxing flourished throughout the country in the 1920s, '30s and '40s. Heavyweight title fights generated tremendous interest and large crowds gathered around radios to argue, bet and listen. There was a set of boxing gloves on main street in most small towns where impromptu matches were held and heated arguments were settled with the gloves.

The carnival athletic shows on the midway at the county fairs drew large and enthusiastic crowds as the carnival fighters took on all comers. Boxing was a way to pick up a few dollars during the Depression. Amateurs received a set amount, winners \$3, losers \$2. Johnny Neumann, the "fighting cop," Jimmy Worrall and Jack Jones of Knoxville, Roxy Marvelli of Pershing, Chet Jones of Dallas, Van Waller of Pleasantville, "Tiger Jack" Payne and "Wild Bill" Henderson of Oskaloosa and the Diekema brothers of Monroe were some of the names that might appear on a professional fight card held in the Memorial Hall.

Some of the cards were held at "stag smokers," a term used to disguise illegal gambling activities. An exhibition match between the very young Voyce twins, Dale and Don, often opened the cards. They were rewarded with coins tossed into the ring by the spectators.

I got involved in amateur boxing and was a 190-pound heavyweight on the Knoxville CCC Camp team coached by Neumann. Not being a hard puncher, I adopted a style consistent with the old saying, "He who fights and runs away lives to fight another day." That I did and in my first bout won a decision over Howard Wilson who could hit like a mule kicking.

Our next match was against a team from a black athletic club in Des Moines. Heavyweights being the last on the card, I sat in the dressing room and watched my bruised and battered teammates stagger in—all losers! Not too good for one's morale! My morale didn't improve when I climbed into the ring to face a superbly muscled specimen of mankind dancing and shadow boxing in the opposite corner. He was a slugger with a whistling right hand which I avoided and scored with counter punches to his body.

Disaster struck in the second round when I failed to see him launch a crushing right hand blow. Pow! Flush on the old beak! Out flew my mouth-piece, stars and colored lights flashed and I went to the canvas on all fours, but mostly it hurt—hurt—hurt! Up at the count of eight, I tried to dodge his power punch but the blow had dulled my reflexes and blows to the side of

my head floored me two more times. Under amateur rules the three knock-downs in one round automatically ended the fight.

The CCC camp moved to Oskaloosa. In a bout at the YMCA, I met Gus Isenberger, a squat, rolypoly, Tony Galento-type from Truro. Our match resembled a street brawl at times when he gave me a knee to the groin and I angrily retaliated with a head butt to his nose. Ouch! Awarded the decision, I decided to retire from my pugilistic career.

Because of winter blahs, inactivity and boredom, I unwisely said, "OK," when Bill Seddon from Melcher suggested we enter the Des Moines Golden Glove tourney. Trotting around the fairgrounds rack track a couple of times and climbing the stairs to the Apex night club several times constituted the extent of our training. The tournament was held in the cavernous Coliseum, where bouts started at 1 p.m. and three rings were in use continuously and simultaneously.

At 12 midnight I entered the ring against Maurice Cleveland from Winterset. I was out boxing him until my lack of training caught up with me and I ran out of steam in the third round and suffered a three knockdown rule T-kayo.

That was it-no more boxing! One evening after supper, I was in the canteen eating a candy bar and drinking a coke when Chet Jones called me from the YMCA with an urgent plea, "Red, we have no heavyweight to go against the Newton team, we need you!" You guessed it! Off to the YMCA I went to crawl into the ring to face "Gutch" Johnson, a 230-pound, no-neck, wrestler-boxer. I almost climbed right back out! I hit him at will but it didn't seem to bother him much. At the end of the second round, my legs felt rubbery, I was breathless and my stomach containing supper, coke and candy was giving off signals of dire distress.

"You've got him Red," urged Chet.

I wanted to argue that point but had neither the breath nor strength to do so. Fortunately, I got my "second wind" and won by decision.

That was it-no more-no more! Several sports are rough but boxing is the only one where your opponent's objective is to knock you senseless. Amateur boxing with big gloves and protective headgear (which we didn't have) is acceptable and could be of benefit to some youngsters but pro boxing belongs back in the Roman Coliseum with similar types of activities.

Raspberries Are Costly

I don't attend high school basketball games anymore. Having been a basketball referee for a number of years, I found that my irritation at the verbal abuse heaped on the officials by the boo-birds and bleacher referees negated my enjoyment in watching the play of the athletes. It hasn't always been that way you know. Years ago only one referee was utilized and he controlled both the game and the crowd.

On the front page of the December 15, 1932 issue of the *Knoxville Journal* was a story headlined, "Raspberries Are Costly." It was not referring to the price of that particular fruit but to a basketball game played the previous week between the Harvey and Knoxville High School boys on a court in what is now the Junior High School building.

I was a guard on the Harvey team and we came into the Knoxville game with a 7-1 record, having outscored our opponents 302-97. Our only loss was to a Lovilia team led by Nick Militich who later starred at Drake as an all-Missouri Valley Conference forward. Harvey, with sharpshooting forwards Billy Guthrie and Shorty White, Dwight Daugherty at center, and Forrest Blake at the other guard, had used an innovative fast break to rout several teams.

Knoxville had a well-balanced, veteran team with two rangy forwards in Russ Kaster and Ernie Dunham. Big Jim Hindman at center and Bob Leeper

and Harvey Elliott at the guards rounded out a strong Knoxville five. With their height advantage and reserve strength, Knoxville was heavily favored to win. They had swamped Bussey in their only other game.

The game was a well played defensive battle with Knoxville leading most of the way but



Left to right: Donald White, Dwight Daugherty, Forrest Blake, Woodrow Geery, Billy Guthrie, Coach John Mozingo.

could not pull away from the tenacious Harvey cagers. In the third quarter an event occurred that no doubt influenced the outcome of the game. As Harvey forward Shorty White stepped to the foul line to shoot one shot,

several fans released a chorus of boos. Raising his hand in a deliberate, lofty manner, the referee extended two fingers and calmly announced, "Shoot two." A lone spectator then let loose a single boo. Again, the referee statuesquely raised his hand, extended three fingers and said, "Shoot three." In the utter silence that followed, an angry Mr. Steffey, the Knoxville superintendent, shouted, "Shut up you fool, or you'll cost us the game!" (or words to that effect). Shorty made two of the free throws and the game ended in a thrilling 26-24 double overtime victory for Harvey. Knoxville got their revenge with a 30-21 win over Harvey in the first round of the Marion County Tournament played in Melcher's new gym.

Since my playing and refereeing days, basketball has developed into a much faster and more exciting game and is being played by bigger, and generally, more skilled athletes. Once considered a non-contact sport, the increased tempo of play and the size of the players has turned it into very much a contact game and extremely difficult to officiate. I certainly do not advocate a return to the deliberate, low-scoring play of years ago which would probably lull present day spectators to sleep. It is too bad though that some fans do not appreciate the complexities of working games today and feel that the officials are fair game for their vocal assaults.

At the last game I attended, I observed a man who repeatedly stood up and angrily hurled invectives at the referees. I had the feeling he would have been right at home in the crowds that once attended the life and death contests held in the Colosseum at Rome.

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A HARVEY SPORTSBIT – In twelve games, the 1929-30 Harvey High School boys basketball team broke even. They averaged 16 points per game to their opponents 14. Harvey defeated Lacy at Lacy 8-6, scoring all 8 points on free throws. At Bussey, Harvey scored only 4 points, all on free throws and lost 8-4. Harvey lost at Knoxville 18-17 and split with Pella winning 17-14 at Harvey and losing 16-15 at Pella.

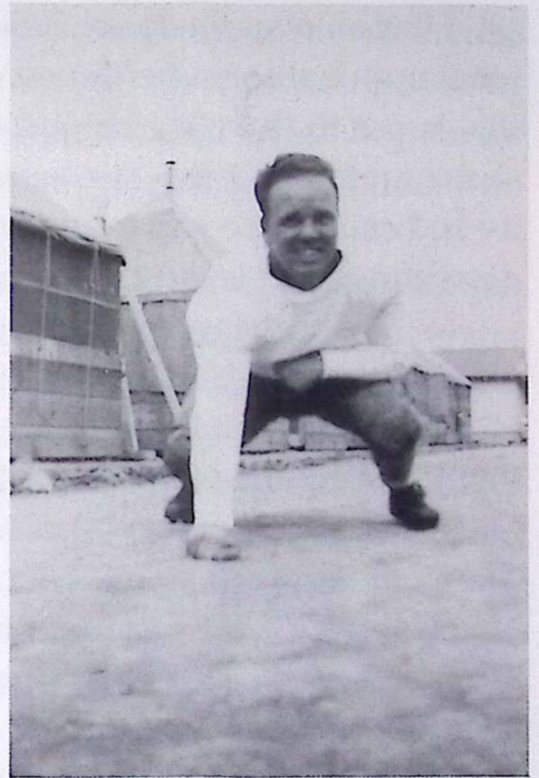
I Was A Football Hero

Perhaps the title of this should be, "Was I A Football Hero?" and let you be the judge. As a boy, I loved football with a passion. In the 1920s, I listened to Iowa games over WSUI at Iowa City. Games away from home came into the studio by telegraph. Following the sound of the clicking telegraph, the announcer would say, "McClain 2 yards," click-click-click, "Glasgow 5 yards," and on and on it went. Whenever possible, I listened to radio network games with the great Ted Husing at the mike. My first hero was Red Cagle, the Army all-American known as the Louisiana Swamp Fox. I memorized the all-American team of 1931-32 from a dog-eared pamphlet and for years could recall their names, positions and schools.

My football career, albeit short, was interesting. In the fall of 1941, I was a draftee in the 40th Division, 160th Infantry Regiment in Camp San Luis Obispo, Calif. Bob Zaparty, a big strapping Polish boy from Chicago, and I decided to try out for the regimental football team even though neither of us had ever had a football uniform on. When I reported for practice, I told the coaches I had played at Harvey High School. I didn't tell them we played in a grassy alley behind the gym in a most unorganized manner in street clothes and which resulted in split lips, bloody noses, torn clothing and painful bruises and abrasions.

I bluffed my way through the early practices until I received written instructions on the fine points of playing tackle from my brother, Bud. He earned four letters at Central and his instructions helped me tremendously. Although I took a beating, I survived the cuts and made the squad as a reserve tackle and sometimes played shoulder to shoulder with my buddy, Zaparty. As a result of loading coal in the strip mines and working at the brickyard, I was a strong and muscular 200-pounder. I was also motivated by the realization that I had an opportunity to realize a cherished dream that had reappeared after having vanished during the grim days of the Depression – a dream of playing football.

When I entered our first game against the Santa Monica Junior College,



Author at 200 pounds, a tackle on 160th Infantry Mustangs.

my mouth was full of cotton and I was in a state of almost complete disorientation - the crowd, the lights, football for the first time! It was almost too much. The first play brought me back to earth and I savored the coach's post-game compliments. I was in seventh heaven!

Against the 185th Infantry team I blocked a punt that set up the winning touchdown - my cup runneth over!

A very good Cal Poly team beat us 14-0. I learned a lesson the hard way in that game when I attempted to hurdle Huey Long, a little all-American blocking back. He almost pinwheeled me into orbit.

Then came the big game. The entire regiment, known as Los Angeles' Own, journeyed to Los Angeles where our team was to play the powerful March Field team in the huge Los Angeles Coliseum. Pre-game ceremonies featured marching bands and the appearance of numerous movie stars. Joe E. Brown had the crowd roaring at his antics. In the tunnel under the stands, I literally bumped into John Wayne. He was big! Rosemary LaPlanche, Miss All-America, was our sweetheart and Marjorie Weaver and Carol Landis were the March Field team's sweethearts.

I had an overwhelming feeling of awe as I trotted out onto the field in the mammoth coliseum before several thousand spectators. It was a far cry from the games in the alley behind the gym in Harvey. There was, however, a fly in the ointment. I was still hampered by a severe ankle sprain and my mobility and endurance was questionable. My desire to play never ebbed and I was determined to play to the limit of my capabilities.

In the dressing room after our warm-up, an unusual scene began to unfold. Mickey Colmer, flanked by our coaches, stood before the squad. Mickey was a fleet-footed, 200-pound bruising fullback who was starring on our 40th Division team. After the war, as a member of the Brooklyn Dodgers, Mickey would become the leading ground gainer in the newly formed American Football Conference. He was available and eager to play against March Field. There was one hitch - there was no uniform available for him. The coaches made it clear they would not ask anyone to give up their uniform but asked us to consider it.

I did some quick soul searching, taking into consideration my bad ankle, my overwhelming desire to play and the value of Mickey's contribution to the team. I figured there would also be other games. In the dead silence in the room, and with a lump in my throat, I stepped forward and offered my uniform. It would be a great ending to write that Mickey ran wild and led our team to a victory and that I was lauded for giving up my uniform. Instead, March Field trounced us and two weeks later the Japs bombed Pearl Harbor. Every fall I relive this episode and wonder what I would have done if my ankle had not been injured. I think I know.

Gym Dandies They Weren't

While watching basketball games being played on gleaming hardwood floors in spacious gyms, I am reminded of some of the facilities in which the game was played in this area in the 1920s and 30s. If O.S.H.A. (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) had been in existence then, some of the facilities would have been condemned for being hazardous to the health and safety of the players.

As the popularity of basketball increased, small high schools scrambled to come up with space in which to play. As my brother Bud so aptly put it, "They tried to find enough room where ten or so bodies could maneuver a little and called it a gymnasium." Melcher, Dallas, Bussey, Attica and Beech had courts in their school buildings and they were often referred to as "cracker boxes."

Few small schools had showers, and dressing rooms were often cold and drafty. On bitter, cold nights, in the more spacious gyms, spectators sat bundled up as the coal-fired stoves fought a losing battle with the elements. Playing surfaces were either hardwood or softwood or smooth cement or rough cement. Athletes constantly flirted with pneumonia when they came off the court at the end of the game wet with perspiration and went out into the cold.

One year at Harvey we rigged up a portable shower by fastening a spigot and shower head to a big galvanized wash tub which we filled with water heated on stoves in the home economics rooms. We hoisted it to the basement ceiling with a rope and pulley. Visiting players laughed at our jerry-built shower, but they used it. Bivans, the big Pleasantville center, had to hunker down to get under the shower.

Swan's gym was an old church with a big cast iron heating stove that jutted out into the playing court at the center line. One of our subs stood by the stove to ward off any players who were in danger of receiving an unwanted branding.

Awhile back, Irv Massick and I visited the old Hiteman gym which was also once a church. The court was short with a very high ceiling and a shot could be launched from about any spot on the floor. The big hot air register had been removed from the floor but signs of it remained. On cold nights it got awfully hot and woe to anyone who fell on it.

There were times when boots would have been more appropriate than basketball shoes when playing in Tracy's old gym. When atmospheric conditions were just right, water accumulated on the smooth cement floor. I was there one night when so much water was on the floor the players were

slipping and sliding around like they were playing on ice. The referee finally called the game because of the water.

Harvey played their first games on an outdoor dirt court. When cold weather arrived they moved to an unfinished building on Main Street which was lighted by gasoline-fueled lights hung on the walls. I recall seeing a player come out of the building with a lacerated knee suffered when he fell on a piece of brick imbedded in the dirt floor.

Old-timers would probably rank the small Bussey gym as the "worst." They would recall the steam pipe that ran above and in front of one basket preventing any arching of a shot at the basket which was under regulation height. One night at Bussey we led two to one at the half but they rallied to beat us six to four. Some rally!

The Harvey High School team once played a game over a store in the old mining town of Rexfield. As the players ran up and down the court, the floor creaked, heaved and sagged and I halfway expected the whole shebang to go crashing into the store below.

The most bizarre game I ever played in took place when Bubber Gott, a fine athlete and sportsman, invited our Harvey town team to play Pershing in the Pershing miner's hall. Before the game, Bubber threatened to do bodily harm to any player who goal tended as the baskets were only about eight feet from the floor. When I jumped center my fingers sometimes touched the ceiling. There were no seats and a highly partisan crowd ringed the floor. Yes, it was quite cozy. After that experience, the Bussey gym didn't seem quite so bad.

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A HARVEY SPORTSBIT – When the Harvey Eagles won the 1933 Class B, Oskaloosa "Y" Gold Medal semipro tournament, the *Oskaloosa Herald* referred to them as "a bunch of hot-shots from the little Marion County town." Rupert Wilson and Geryll Lash at forwards, Mike Harvey at center and Merlyn Ward and Bud Geery at guards constituted a very fine team. They came back from an 11-2 first quarter deficit in the final game to beat a very strong Leighton team, 23-21. Mike Harvey took tournament scoring honors, and he and Bud Geery were named to the all-tournament team.

When the Pros Came to Town

In the late 1920s and through the 1930s semi-pro basketball flourished in this area. Their games provided a much needed diversion during the bleak days of those desperate years. Made up mostly of high school grads, the teams sported names such as the Knoxville Cardinals, Pershing Aces, Harvey Eagles, Pleasantville Owls and the Hiteman Miners. The Knoxville Cardinals, powered by such talented players as Stoney Carle, Dan Speed, Charlie Yando and Howard Kading, were of this area and competed mostly with teams from the Des Moines area. Geryll Lash, Rupert Wilson, Mike Harvey, Merlyn Ward and Bud Geery made up the Harvey Eagles team that won the Oskaloosa YMCA Gold Medal tournament in 1933. However, the highlight of the season for some of the little towns were the games played against the traveling professional teams.

I was playing with the Harvey team in the mid-1930s when Reed Ward and I decided it would be a good idea to book a game with the Harlem Globe Trotters. Without questioning the size of our town or the probable gate, the Trotters agreed to play us on a 60-40 basis. There was no question, of course, who would get the 60 percent of the gate.

The night of the game rolled around and the gym was packed with spectators—mostly locals. A preliminary game was scheduled for seven o'clock with the feature game to start at eight. The first game ran past eight o'clock but Reed and I didn't mind because the Globe Trotters hadn't shown up. In desperation, we extended the preliminary game another quarter and then, another quarter. The crowd was getting restless and Reed and I were eying the back door of the gym not wanting to face a hostile crowd if the Globe Trotters didn't show.

It was almost nine o'clock when the door opened; the crowd momentarily quieted and then roared as Abe Saperstein and his five black players entered. The players peeled off their overcoats and immediately awed and delighted the crowd with the razzle-dazzle of their pregame warm-up. They were already in uniform having played a game at Searsboro earlier and then driven to Harvey. They displayed their usual basketball wizardry in a game filled with routines of skill and trickery. The crowd loved it and the gym reverberated with laughter and cheers as we became unwilling pawns in their acts of deception and dupery. The fans forgot the deprivation and misery of the times and during the days that followed, talk of the game brought smiles to their depression-weary faces.

After accepting their \$24 share of the gate, the Trotters donned their overcoats and were off to continue their barnstorming. A \$40 gate! not

much, but at 25 cents a head money didn't accumulate very rapidly, and there weren't too many quarters available for recreation. One could get a good meal at the Jones Cafe for two bits. George Vecesey's book on the Harlem Globe Trotters reveals that they played for much less on some occasions.

Encouraged by our successful venture with the Globe Trotters, we booked a game with the Chicago Hottentots, another all-black team that was touring the Midwest. The Hottentots featured "Smokey Joe" Lillard, an outstanding athlete and graduate of Mason City High School. He had been tabbed to become an All-American football player at an Oregon university but had dropped out of school. Not a clowning team, they zipped the ball around so fast we almost got dizzy trying to follow it. Then, at their leisure and with deadly accuracy, they would sink a shot. It got to be downright disheartening. "Smokey Joe" was only about five feet nine, but to the amazement of all, he could "slam dunk" the ball. However, at that time the term "slam dunk" had not originated. During the last quarter we had eight or nine men on the floor, but they still controlled the game. The Hottentots didn't generate the excitement the Globe Trotters had. The Harlem Globe Trotters were a hard act to follow!

We tried to schedule Olson's Terrible Swedes, another professional team touring the Midwest, but they wanted a guarantee which we couldn't possibly meet.

Last summer, during the Harvey homecoming celebration, I stood amidst the shambles of the old gym and remembered when the pros came to town.

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A HARVEY SPORTSBIT – May 30, 1941 - 18 year old Paul Holdsworth on the mound for the Harvey Indies struck out 24 batters today as the Indies downed the Albia Merchants 5-1 in a baseball game played on the Harvey field. 17-year-old Don Geery was behind the plate. On five occasions Holdsworth struck out the side. Sulentich and Brazovich formed the Albia battery. A single by Kausalik and an unearned run ruined the young hurler's bid for a perfect game. Harvey will face the powerful Kellogg semipro team Sunday.

A DHCF

Spring always means another crisis in my life. It happens when the baseball season begins. Once again, I must decide whether my body and mind are ready for another season as a Chicago Cubs fan. Will I have enough resilience to don my blue cap with the red "C" on it and pretend not to notice the smirking of those who identify me as a Cubs fan?

I jumped on the Cubs bandwagon one fall day in 1929 when they were playing Connie Mack's Philadelphia Athletics in the fourth game of the World Series. I was rooting for the Cubs mainly because my brother Bud was pulling for the A's and the Cubs were leading 8-0 in the seventh inning. Everything was hunky-dory - I thought. What happened that day should have forewarned me of things to come. The Cubs fell apart. Hack Wilson lost two fly balls in the sun, and the A's scored 10 runs to win the game and eventually, the series. Whatever infects a die-hard Cubs fan infected me that day and I have weathered 57 years of their not-so-sterling performances. There were some good years, though.

In the early thirties as the Depression scourged the country, I joined the group of unemployed men gathered around the Atwater Kent radio in Paul Thomassen's store and listened to Bob Elson broadcast the games over WGN. When Bob described the mouth-watering cuisine served at Thompson's Restaurants, George Nail, a truly funny man, much to the delight of the group would stand up, rub his stomach, groan, utter a few cuss words and implore Bob to "stop it." T-bones, filet mignons and French pastries were only fantasies in Harvey then. The Cubs won the pennant in 1932, but lost the series to the Yankees. It was a series most notable for a game in which Babe Ruth pointed to the center field fence and then proceeded to hit one over it.

In the mid-thirties, I often walked a mile into Harvey to listen to the Cubs games in Bill Bean's Jack Sprat grocery store being broadcast over WHO radio. The announcer was Ronald Reagan. He would take very skimpy information from a ticker tape and re-create the game as though he was at Wrigley Field. He was sponsored by General Mills and when a Cubs player would hit a home run he would excitedly shout, "...going, going, going, gone and another case of Wheaties for..." The Cubs won the pennant in 1935 but fell to the Detroit Tigers in the Series.

One Sunday in 1938, a dream of mine was realized when Shorty White, Henry Kersey, Rex Bean and I drove to Chicago in Rex's Model A Ford to watch the Cubs play the New York Giants. The Cubs had taken over first place the day before and pennant fever gripped the Windy City. We arrived Sunday morning. None of us had ever been to a big city before and were sur-

prised at the friendliness of the Chicago motorists who yelled and waved as we drove down the street. We, of course, smiled and waved back. It must be our Iowa license, we thought. We finally realized that they weren't exactly friendly and their waves weren't exactly waves. We were going the wrong way on a one-way street. We didn't have any one-way streets in Harvey.

We paid some street people a couple of dollars to watch our parked car. This would insure that our car would have all four wheels and tires on it when the game was over. We ate our picnic lunch of fried chicken and entered Wrigley Field. After years of playing high school and semi-pro baseball on fields carved out of pastures where infielders dodged crazy hops and outfielders dodged cow piles, I was awed by the sight of Wrigley Field's ivy-covered walls and the manicured infield. It was the Eden of baseball. I was in seventh heaven as we watched the Cub greats Hartnett, Grimm, Herman, Hack, et. al. beat the Giant greats Hubbell, Ott, Jo-Jo Moore, Bartell, et. al. 4-3 in fourteen innings. The Cubs won the pennant but lost the series to the Yankees in four games. It was the last series for Lou Gehrig. The terrible disease which now bears his name was noticeably affecting his play.

While the Cubs were making their last successful drive for a pennant in 1945, I was not aware of it as my infantry outfit was locked in combat with the Japanese in the mountains in the Philippine Islands. Not much news reached us in our foxholes and we were more concerned with flying grenades than flying baseballs. Peace came and on my way home I learned that the Cubs were winning the pennant. I fervently hoped I would get home in time for the series and maybe join some of my old friends around a radio at a main street business in Harvey. The series started the day after I got home. No crowd gathered around a radio on main street. I listened alone at home. The Cubs lost. Some things change - some don't.

I suffered through the 1969 debacle when Durocher's Cubs blew a lead in the final days of the pennant race. In 1984, I followed them in the newspapers in England as they won the National League East pennant and watched them on TV fail miserably in the playoffs. It hasn't been easy being a Cubs fan all these years. The baseball season is here. I have to make a decision.

"Florence, where is my Cubs cap?" (*DHCF - Die Hard Cubs Fan*)

Baseball, Fried Chicken & Big John

Somewhere along the way, a bit of Americana disappeared from Marion County. Semipro or town team baseball which once flourished in Marion County is now extinct and, like the dinosaurs, few traces remain.

Every town and hamlet in Marion County, at one time or another in the '20s, '30s and '40s, supported a semipro baseball team. Even the smallest--Red Rock, Marysville, Attica, Harvey, Flagler, Tracy and Swan--fielded teams. The Pershing Cubs were an all-black team. Made up of veterans, youngsters and in-betweens, the teams were a source of community pride and received rabid support from the local populace. Not only did baseball provide recreation and entertainment, it was an opportunity for the smaller towns to tweak the noses of their larger rivals. Teams from the smaller towns took on teams from Ottumwa, Oskaloosa, Des Moines, Grinnell and Knoxville and won their share of the games. In the '30s, town team baseball provided a diversion from the dismalness of the Great Depression.

Sunday afternoon in the summer was baseball time. During the week, the upcoming game was a hot topic of conversation among the fans who eagerly awaited game time. Local fans and a contingent from the visiting town converged on the baseball field for a close-up view of the contest. There were a few grandstands and while most fans sat behind the screen, some sat on the ground dangerously close to the foul lines and dodged wicked foul balls. They were really into the game! When long-time rivals met, it was not unusual for sizable wagers to be made.

The local team members would have gathered at the field Sunday morning to mow the outfield and drag the diamond. Playing conditions ranged from excellent to terrible. Sun-baked infields were hard and unyielding. At Miami our game was called because the weeds in the outfield were so high that fly balls not caught were lost. At a



1938 Harvey Indies. Back row, left to right: John Barnett, Reed Ward, Wayne Green, Woody Geery, "Red" Lash, Dwight Daugherty. Front row, left to right: "Bud" Geery, Ray Holdsworth, Merlyn Ward, "Shorty" White, Henry Kersey.

Buxton reunion game between Harvey and Bussey, the infield was so cloddy, ground balls ricocheted sideways and straight up. Infielders risked life and limb that day. Outfielders sometimes shared the outfield with livestock. Those conditions were the exceptions and not the rule.

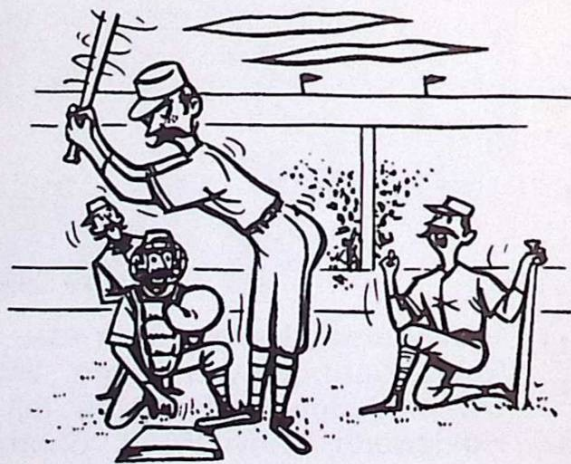
The caliber of play ranged from excellent to not so good. However, regardless of the circumstances, the zeal and fervor with which the players competed was undiminished.

I was exposed to baseball early in life when my father managed the Harvey town team. When I couldn't go with them to another town, I was heartbroken and would go behind the garage and cry. So it was only natural that after high school I would become a participant in Harvey town team baseball. As a result, when we played out of town, I missed many of my mother's scrumptious fried chicken dinners.

The exodus of players to the service and defense factories during WWII sounded the death knell for semipro baseball in most small towns. After the war, some made an attempt to revive town team baseball but a dearth of talent, lighted parks and the paying of players added new dimensions to the situation and small town baseball could not survive. Knoxville fielded some fine semipro teams during the '50s, but the high cost of operations and maintaining facilities and lack of support contributed to the demise of town team baseball in Marion County.

Occasionally I thumb through some old scorebooks and my mind fills with memories. Players come to life and I see the sites and hear the sounds of exciting Sunday afternoon baseball games once played on fields where corn fields, buildings and the waters of Lake Red Rock now stand.

I offer this piece as a tribute to all the town team players of Marion County and dedicate it to the memory of a former teammate who was the epitome of a semipro player. A fierce competitor of great talent, his sportsmanship far exceeded acceptable standards. He was a source of inspiration both off and on the field and was a man of high moral and religious integrity. If there is a semipro team in heaven, Big John Barnett will be on the mound.



The Long and Short Of It

The recent decision to phase out two-court six-girl basketball caused quite a stir among fans, coaches, parents, players and female players of yesteryear. Recently, while talking to some present-day players, they expressed amazement when I told them that girls once played on courts divided into three sections. There were two forwards, two guards and two centers. One center was designated 'jumping center' and was tall, of course. The 'running center' was usually short and speedy. When a guard got a rebound, the ball had to go to one of the centers and then to a forward. There was no passing from a guard to a forward.

Players were allowed one dribble. Then there was the juggle, which was another way to advance the ball. My sister Ruth, a forward, was quite adept at executing this maneuver. When the guard went into her defensive stance in front of her, she would softly lob the ball over the guard's head, then dart around her to retrieve the ball and shoot. The dribble and juggle could not be used in tandem.

The first girls' basketball team at Harvey High School in the mid-'20s wore rather bulky uniforms compared to those of today. The voluminous styled, pleated bloomers reached below the knees. All players wore hose and rather high-laced shoes. A full-cut blouse or middy with long sleeves and a large collar rounded out the uniform. For sure, there was a minimum of bare skin showing.

The uniforms gradually changed as the hose were discarded, short-sleeved blouses appeared and the bloomers



Almost a complete cover-up.

1924-25 Harvey Girls Basketball Team

L to R (top): Coach Webb, Dorothy Geery, Mabel Vander Heiden, Thelma Wilson. (Middle) Elsie McKenzie, Blanche Parsons, Dorothy Bean. (Sitting) Beulah Lancaster, Margaret McKenzie.

became less cumbersome. So it was that in the early 1930s the Harvey High School ordered new uniforms for the girls. A large crowd gathered at the first game to watch the girls display their talent and their new uniforms. Their talent was forgotten and the uniforms became the focus of attention. The usual automatic cheers when the girls ran out on the floor soon turned into a semi-silence punctuated by whispers and nervous titters. The sight of snug-fitting

and very short-legged trunks sent shock waves through the crowd. Then followed the clucking of the crowd, the shaking of heads, stern looks and frowns. The game and its result became inconsequential. The trunks were the center of attention. The change from the bloomers to the short snug-fitting trunks was simply too much.

Next day, the town buzzed with talk of the uniforms. Disgraceful! Outlandish! Scandalous! Sinful! The citizens were upset. One hearing all of this and not having seen the uniforms might well have visualized the girls being dressed like the girls in the Ziegfield Follies. The school board met! Parents met! Teachers met! There will be no more games in these uniforms was the ultimate decision.

However, some cooler heads prevailed. Too much money invested to toss away. The Great Depression was being felt. Why not lengthen and let out the trunks. Why not! The OK to do this resulted in a flurry of activity. Matching material was located and the seamstresses went to work and the alterations were completed in time for the next game. According to my sister Ruth, nine inches were added to one of the players' trunks.

As expected, a full house turned out for the next game. The additions to the trunks seemed to placate most of the dissenters, but some still grumbled. From bloomers to bare legs was just too much.

The length of women's skirts is supposed to be an indicator of the economy. I notice that boys' basketball trunks are becoming longer and sloppier. I wonder what that is an indication of.



1926-27 Team: left to right, Dorothy Geery, Louise Yates, Mabel Vander Heiden, Mildred Gillespie, Daisy Parsons, Faye Beaver.

The Harvey Olympics

Without Little League, Babe Ruth and Pee Wee baseball and other organized sports, one might assume that young boys growing up in Harvey had long and boring summers.

Far from it! In the spring we idolized the high school track stars and watched them compete in dual and triangular meets. We eagerly looked forward to hitch-hiking to Knoxville to watch them compete in the Marion County meet at the fairgrounds.

With school out, Billy Guthrie, Tommy Beaver, Clyde Redding, Joe Bryant, Bob Gluck and I set out to have our own track and field fun. In Guthrie's back yard, we dug a jumping and vaulting pit. Sawdust for the pit was obtained from a sawmill some two miles away. We piled several heavy burlap bags filled with sawdust onto a large, heavy, cumbersome cart we made with four iron cultivator wheels.

We pulled, pushed, struggled, sweated and strained uphill and down until we rather triumphantly paraded down Main Street under the quizzical stares of the citizenry. We scrounged two narrow boards for our jumping and vaulting standards and drove nails in them about an inch apart for the cross-bar which was a willow pole from the banks of English Creek. Vaulting poles varied from a willow sapling to 2" by 2" boards with the edges rounded off. All were unsafe.

Discus, shot and javelin? A cast iron cookstove lid, a sadiron and another slender willow pole with the end sharpened. Twice around the block was a mile, once around a half mile, etc.

For about a month we spent most of our spare time at Guthrie's running, jumping and throwing. As much as possible we had followed the Amsterdam Olympics in the newspapers and over radio. So, why don't we have the Harvey Olympics!

Well, why not? So, we did. Joe and I spent several evenings making make-believe medals out of cardboard. All were round and colored yellow for the gold, white for the silver and brown for the bronze. Each medal could be suspended by a short looped string.

We designated a day for our Olympics and began practicing in earnest. On the morning of the big event, we erected five two-foot-high hurdles by laying a lath over two laths driven into the ground on the shoulder of the road.

The hurdles would run against time by two of us using pocket watches with second hands. No doubt this would have provoked some arguments, but Fid Riggins negated that when he ran over our hurdles with a coal truck before we got started. Collectively, we vowed to thrash him to within an inch

of his life when we got big. Like many vows, it was never carried out.

Despite the letdown of the hurdles incident, our Olympics proceeded with enthusiasm, competitiveness and sportsmanship. Billy was favored in the pole vault, but I won. I was favored in the high jump, but Joe won. Tommy was older and more mature than the rest of us, so he only competed in a limited number of the events.

Tommy also mediated any disputes. We abided by his decisions rather than risk a swat to the side of the head. For several hours, we ran, jumped, vaulted and threw with the fervor and zeal of the real Olympians.

No shirt, no shoes, and bibless overalls was the attire for the day. With reckless abandon and crude form, we threw ourselves at the crossbar and into the sawdust pit.

Fragile muscles strained to heave the sadiron, stovelid and willow pole. We were all doubly alert when discus throwers spun and released that dangerous missile.

Passers-by paused to smile at our activities, and girls mostly giggled at the sight of the straining and contorting of our scrawny bodies. Medals were awarded after each event. No bands played. No flags flew. Faces beamed as we accepted our medals.

The overall champion was awarded a statuette I had made out of a picture of Charles Paddock, an Olympic champion sprinter, pasted on cardboard and mounted on a two-inch piece of a pick handle.

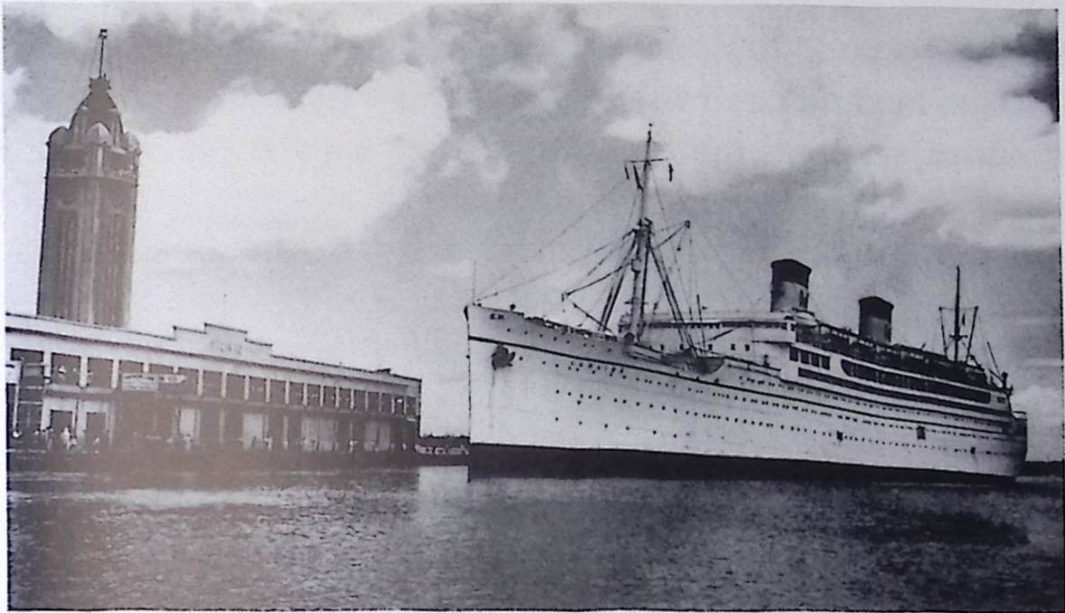
That evening we all met in Harley Ward's cafe with our medals strung on our shirt fronts. With faces wreathed in smiles we relived the excitement of our Harvey Olympics.

You will have noticed by now that there were no adults involved, no drives for money, no fancy uniforms, shoes and equipment, but that certainly didn't dim our enthusiasm or stunt our ingenuity.

BASEBALLBIT – Harvey's young kids would haunt the baseball diamond from 'dawn to dark.' Author stands with nephews, (L) Norm and (R) Larry Milledge. Later they moved to Tracy and were standouts in both baseball and basketball. Both had short stints with major league farm clubs.



Army Days



The SS Lurline, a Matsonian luxury liner which transported us to Guadalcanal. It was camouflaged and we traveled unescorted around 22 knots per hour – too fast for Japanese U-boats to get a bead on us; so they said.

Army Days

	Page
A Long Year	117
A World War II Interlude	119
Truth Stranger Than Fiction?	121
One Soldier's Christmas Eve	123
Memories of S-Day	125
Banzai!	127
Go, and Sin No More	129
Number One Ki-ki	132
If War Comes	134



Somewhere in the Philippine mountains. L to R: Author; Frazzini, New York; Kozicki, Michigan; Steward, Texas; Lowrie, Texas. The infantryman's war was a fight for survival amid violent death, terror, heat, rain, tension, fatigue and filth. Cruelty was not uncommon as decent men were reduced to brutish behavior in their fight for survival. Any code of conduct toward the enemy was discarded and replaced with savagery.

A Long Year

In 1941, a popular song in the United States went something like this, "Goodbye, dear; I'll be back in a year for I'm in the Army now!" It was, of course, referring to the draft which required one year of military service. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor rendered that song inappropriate and obsolete.

With the surrender of France on June 22, 1940, it became apparent that Great Britain could not hold out forever against Hitler's war machine. America readied for war even though there was a strong feeling of isolationism in the country.

On Sept. 4, 1940, Congress, by one vote, passed the conscription bill authorizing the drafting into the Army of men between the ages of 18 and 38. I registered for the draft on Oct. 16.

The first draft lottery was held in Washington, D.C. on Oct. 29 when the secretary of war, wearing a blindfold, drew the first numbers out of the "fish bowl." On Oct. 30, when I read the list of draft numbers in the morning paper, I knew my days as a civilian were numbered.

On Dec. 16, I had a pre-induction physical by Dr. Bridgeman, and on March 8, 1941, I was sworn in at Fort Des Moines. Several Marion County men had volunteered and that kept me from going earlier. I had no strong feelings against being drafted, but looked upon it as a new experience and a chance to see some more of the country.

I did see some more of the country and several far-off places of which I knew very little or had even heard of. The long ride on the troop train to Camp Roberts, Calif., for basic training, assignment to the 40th Infantry Division at San Luis Obispo, Calif., large scale maneuvers in the state of Washington, visits to Los Angeles and San Francisco and other new experiences hastened the time.

So it was that on Dec. 7, 1941, I was lying in my bunk waiting for the noon meal and dreaming about my discharge only three months away when I would be returning home and getting behind the wheel of my neat 1933 Chevrolet. My reveries were brought to a screeching halt when I heard Fred Powell's excited voice as he ran down the company street shouting, "The Japs have bombed Pearl Harbor!"

This must be a dream, I thought. I had never heard of Pearl Harbor, and besides, Japan wouldn't dare attack the United States of America!

It was no dream. After the initial shock, the excitement ebbed and grim reality set in. Sober-faced G.I.s gathered around radios and listened to the continuous news reports. As the scope and consequences of the tragedy

emerged, we looked into each other's eyes and silently conveyed the same question, "What does the future hold for us now?"

The year of service would stretch on indefinitely.

Some two or three weeks prior to Dec. 7, our Division was placed on alert and we were ordered to get rid of all non-government issue clothing and equipment and be prepared to move out on a 12-hour notice. Early Monday morning, Dec. 8, our convoy of troops pulled into Los Angeles.

Why were we on an alert in California and the military in Hawaii was not? A lieutenant, who was on duty at Fort Devens, Mass., on Dec. 7, asked the same question in a recent magazine article. I don't think we will ever know for sure the answer to that question.

Before we left Camp San Luis Obispo, all soldiers of Japanese descent were assembled near our company street and were told they were being taken from the regiment immediately. The group began crying and wailing, which created the most weird and unearthly sound. After that, I said goodbye to my close friend, Freddie Kurimoto, and never saw him again.

My military experience took me to the Hawaiian Islands, whose beauty was still unsullied by hordes of tourists and real estate developers. Unescorted, the big luxury liner, the Lurline, took us to Guadalcanal with its jungles, torrential rains and giant mosquitoes. Yet, it was a beautiful spot in many respects.

On the island of New Britain, we patrolled deep into pristine areas of giant trees among whose branches huge fruit bats, large lizard-like iguanas and exotic birds made their homes. We landed in the first wave on Luzon and Panay in the Philippine Islands. Combat brought the agonizing experience of seeing long-time friends and buddies killed and wounded.

In August 1945, after three years overseas, I started the long journey home on a Dutch transport. After 25 days we landed at Seattle. Then it was a train ride to Fort Leavenworth, Kan., where I was discharged after four years, six months and 12 days of service. A train ride to Des Moines, an evening at Babes, and then a train ride home.

There was no flag waving and cheering when Dad met me at the station. He embraced me and said softly, "It's been a long time." The only noise was a couple of dogs barking at us as we drove down the main street in Harvey to our home.

Mom was standing on the porch when we drove into the yard. As I had done often in the past four years, I recalled our goodbye four years prior. We had embraced and I said, "See you in six months." I remembered her next words frequently during the next four years. "No, Wood, it will be a long time before we see you again." It was a long four years.

A World War II Interlude

While in California this past winter, Florence and I had occasion to visit Long Beach and San Pedro. I was a soldier in that area during the first weeks of WWII. Returning there revived a lot of memories.

On Dec. 8, 1941, less than 24 hours after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, I was riding in a long convoy of army vehicles and Greyhound buses carrying troops of the 40th Infantry Division into the Los Angeles area. Our convoy was greeted by large crowds of anxious and frightened people lining the streets cheering and waving American flags. It was a very emotional experience for me.

People along the western coast had reason to be anxious and frightened. The almost total destruction of our fleet in Pearl Harbor had left the west coast, with its many defense facilities, exposed to a possible invasion by Japanese forces.

We sat in silence in the mess hall in Fort MacArthur and listened as President Roosevelt delivered his "a date which will live in infamy..." speech and declared war on the Japanese Empire. I was a draftee and due to be discharged in March 1942. That was all changed now and I pondered what the future held for me. A few yards away, giant 14-inch coastal guns stood with muzzles pointed ominously to the west. Shortly afterward, our division headquarters issued the first field order of WWII containing the words, "Defeat and destroy any invading forces."

Our unit was deployed throughout the area guarding oil refineries, bridges, oil terminals and other key installations. We stood four hours on guard then six hours off and there were no passes. This routine tested our morale, our fortitude and our digestive systems. Eating army chow at those irregular hours produced a continual heartburn. It was especially disheartening on New Year's Eve when we stopped revelers at our roadblock, then watched as they drove away, living it up, while we shivered in the cold, foggy weather.

Those first weeks were hectic and filled with tension as the citizens coped with the blackout and curtailment of their freedom of movement by grim-faced GIs with loaded rifles and fixed bayonets. Newspapers added to the fear and tension with glaring headlines: "Enemy planes sighted over California Coast," "Japs may attempt landing," and "Probability enemy carriers lurking off coast."

Apprehension and fear increased when on Feb. 24, 1942, a Japanese submarine shelled the oil fields near Santa Barbara and a merchant ship, the S.S. *Absaroka*, was torpedoed a few hundred yards off the coast. On Feb. 25,

1942, air raid sirens sounded at 2:33 a.m. and powerful searchlights probed the skies over Los Angeles. The already jittery citizens were awakened as the thunderous roar of dozens of big anti-aircraft guns rocked the area. To most people, an attack on the United States was underway. Rumors spread like wildfire and people panicked. Cars crashed and collided as frightened and angry motorists ignored the blackout speed limits.

I was a near casualty. Those of us off duty hurried from our quarters to board trucks which would take us to reinforce our guard posts. In the confusion of the total blackout, I pitched headlong into a garbage pit. Luckily, it was newly dug and I ended up with only sand in my eyes, ears, nose and gun barrel. The all clear was not sounded until dawn.

Much like today, the information out of Washington was confusing. The Secretary of Navy claimed there were no planes. The Secretary of War said there were. History confirms that the Secretary of Navy was right.

The threat of invasion subsided and we were allowed six-hour passes. Most of us headed for the Pike, an amusement street that stretched along the Long Beach waterfront. Lined with bistros, a dance hall and carnival type rides, it was a great place for guard-weary GIs to unwind. It is no longer there, having been a victim of progress.

The woman from Illinois and I were both gazing at the Long Beach waterfront as we stood on the deck of the Queen Mary. A conversation with her disclosed that she too had frequented the Pike during WWII. "I was hoping I would see some sign of the Pike," she said rather dejectedly.

Me too, lady, me too.

A WARBIT –
On February 24,
1942, the U.S.
freighter, the
S.S. Absaroka,
was torpedoed
just a short
distance off the
California coast
by a Jap sub-
marine. Only
her load of
lumber kept her
from sinking.



Truth Stranger Than Fiction

Truth can be stranger or at least as strange as fiction. I am hooked on the TV show *M*A*S*H* and watch re-runs that I have already seen two or three times. In a recent episode, Hawkeye removed the appendix of a gung ho major even though the Major didn't have appendicitis. It was apparent that the Major had the reputation of being over-zealous in ordering GIs into hopeless combat situations which resulted in heavy casualties. Rather than let the Major return to the front for a big offensive, Hawkeye removed his appendix. It makes an interesting story but something like this would only happen in fiction, you say. Read on.

In 1942, while in the Army in Hawaii, I had surgery for a burst appendix at an Army field hospital and was placed in a special room next to the doctor's office. Only a thin wall separated the two rooms. One evening, several days after my surgery, I could hear two doctors discussing a newly admitted patient. It was a heated discussion and I could hear it plainly. One doctor was a captain and the other was the Major who had operated on me. The Major had been a prominent surgeon in Seattle's largest hospital in civilian life. The gist of the discussion was whether the patient's appendix should be removed. The Captain was adamant in his opinion that the soldier did not have appendicitis. The Major conceded that the patient might not have appendicitis but pointed out that the soldier might get into combat on one of the remote islands in the Pacific, have appendicitis, and there would be no facilities or personnel to take care of him. The Major reiterated that he had not operated on anyone for four or five days and that he was fearful that his surgical skills were deteriorating. I remember his saying, "Back home in Seattle, I performed surgery several times a day and this boredom and inactivity is driving me up a wall!" The Major, of course, outranked the Captain and the next day they removed the soldier's appendix. I was moved out of the special room to the ward into a bed next to the patient who had just lost his appendix. He was a big, lanky, outspoken, Texas cowboy who rode bulls on the rodeo circuit. He was also a natural comic and had us stretching our stitches at his humor.

He complained to me that he still had pain and felt badly. If he knew what had happened, I thought, the doctors would be in for a bad time. I wasn't about to tell him what I had overheard.

One morning, as the Captain was making rounds in our ward, the cowboy, who hadn't noticed the Captain, exclaimed loudly to me, "Red, them blankety-blank doctors took out my appendix but I'm still sicker than h--l. I never had appendicitis!" The Captain, within earshot, heard the cowboy's

remarks. His face turned a bright red as he said, "Of course you had appendicitis." The cowboy's temper flared and with cowboy language told the Captain he was still sick and wanted some relief. How ironic, I thought, that the Captain had to take all the cowboy's flak. He was taken to a base hospital and via the grapevine we heard he had been diagnosed as having ulcers.

I suppose readers will have varied points of view concerning this incident. Certainly the Major had no real justification for his actions. I got to know him better during my thirty-day stay in the hospital and developed a sympathetic understanding of his frustration with the inactivity and boredom he was experiencing. Maybe he did the cowboy a favor. At least he wouldn't miss any rodeos because of appendicitis.



E COMPANY WARBIT – Bookstein, Chicago; Gerns, Los Angeles; Tucker, Birmingham. Their haggard looks reflect the strain and stress of trying to carry out E Company's mission, "to seek out and destroy the enemy in the Bucari area." We were only about a hundred strong. We knew the Jap forces far outnumbered us and reported that to the battalion C.O. He ignored our reports and ordered us to continue our mission. When the war ended some 1800 to 2000 enemy troops in the Bucari area surrendered. Colonel Tozuka, their commander, said his force was in a position to wipe us out. Had he done so, he felt, the U.S. would have sent in a far superior force and destroyed his troops. In view of this, he decided to use only defensive and harassing tactics.

One Soldier's Christmas Eve

It is Christmas Eve, 1944. I am an infantry soldier on board the huge troop transport, *General Knox*, which lies at anchor in Manus Harbor in the Admiralty Islands in the South Pacific. We are part of a task force rendezvousing for the largest amphibious operation to take place in the Pacific in WWII. More than 800 ships will participate.

A few days ago we were briefed on our mission. On January 9, 1945, we will make an amphibious landing at Lingayen Gulf on the island of Luzon in the Philippine Islands. Our company will be in the first wave going ashore. I live now with the realization that some of us will never experience another Christmas Eve.

Manus Harbor is ablaze with lights from the armada of warships, troop transports, aircraft carriers and auxiliary vessels crowded into the vast anchorage. The blinking of the many signal lights adds a festive air to the otherwise somber situation. The battleship *South Dakota*, with its monstrous guns, is anchored near us. The great battleship *Iowa* glided by us this morning with its rear gun turret showing heavy damage from enemy fire. Seeing the *Iowa* brought a twinge of homesickness. It has been more than three years since I was home.

I attended church services held on deck earlier in the evening. Singing the old familiar carols was enjoyable and helped ease the tension that has been growing daily. I never attended church back home. Tonight, I fleetingly questioned how God will choose those of us to make the supreme sacrifice.

A Bing Crosby movie was shown on deck tonight. As the boys' choir sang "Silent Night," hardened soldiers sniffled and wiped tears from their eyes.

After the movie, I sit on deck with a Texas buddy and reminisce about other Christmas times. We recall the ones with presents and bountiful dinners and remember too those during the Depression when there were no gifts and dinner was corn bread and beans. We remember school programs, family gatherings and parties. Long periods of silence space our conversation as each of us becomes immersed in our own inner thoughts of the past and our uncertain future.

It nears midnight and the harbor activities subside. A quietness descends upon the assembled forces of death and destruction. The skies are brilliant with stars and the Southern Cross rides high above the horizon. Soon it will be Christmas Day.

We grope our way down the dimly lit passageways to our crowded and steamy quarters deep in the bowels of the big transport. Stale air and sounds of restless sleeping men greet us.

Unsleeping, I lie in my bunk and wonder if the war will ever end. Will there ever truly be peace on earth and good will among men?



E COMPANY WARBIT – We, E Company about 100 strong, dug in on a hill overlooking Bucari in the mountains on Panay in the Philippines. Shortly after this photo was taken, we were machine-gunned and mortared by the Japs. Fortunately, we heard the enemy fire their mortars and had time to scramble into our foxholes before the rounds started coming in. Consequently, we took only minor casualties but their fire shredded the shelter halves stretched over our holes. Just prior to this we had received a message that Kalman, Juban and Lemke had been selected to go home. As I lay in my hole, I prayed that they would not be harmed. Just before darkness set in, we spotted an enemy force of some 500 strong moving into Bucari. We were some 20 miles from any help; there were no roads to Bucari. Just before dark, we fired on Bucari exhausting our mortar ammo and much of our small arms ammo. Under the cover of darkness we trudged some 20 miles to Leon, much of the way down the middle of a shallow river. Totally exhausted, we returned to our base camp. Next day, we watched as Kalman, Juban and Lemke, with broad grins, waved goodbye as their jeep sped down the road on the first leg of their journey to America. Almost simultaneously, we received orders to return to the Bucari area. It was one of life's darker moments.

Memories of S-Day

The brain is a fabulous organ. I was engrossed in paying bills recently and fretting about taxes, insurance and utility bills. Each time I entered 1-9-89 on a check, a blip would register in my subconscious, but the irritating fiscal matters pushed it aside. Then, amazingly, the blip turned to a green light and I remembered that 44 years ago on 1-9-45, my infantry outfit was part of one of the largest amphibious assaults of World War II. We were landing at Lingayen Gulf on Luzon, the island from which General MacArthur had fled in 1942. Bills and taxes were forgotten and that computer in my head began pulling up sights, sounds and thoughts that had long ago registered in the recesses of my mind.

S-Day and we are out of our bunks early deep inside the huge troop transport. We have been aboard a month. Breakfast of steak and eggs is inconsequential. What lies ahead dominates our thoughts. In the crowded dank quarters we assemble, check and recheck our gear-weapons, ammo, rations-and wait for the order to assemble on deck. We are supposed to hit the beach at 0900. I am E Company's weapons platoon sergeant. Lt. Perry, the platoon leader and I go over the landing plans with our men for the final time. The muffled sounds of the naval bombardment drift down into our compartment. We are called to assemble on deck. There we are greeted by the awesome sights and sounds of an amphibious operation of great magnitude. An armada of over 800 vessels of all sizes and descriptions fill the gulf and spill out into the open seas.

The bombardment of the landing site, which is covered by a pall of smoke and dust, is in full fury. Bombers had plastered the area for several days. We can't see the battleships and cruisers but can hear the roar of their guns and the who-o-o-sh of their shells passing overhead. On impact, the exploding shells kick up giant geysers of earth and smoke. We hope they are destroying enemy fortifications but we are aware of what happened at



Smoke and dust from bombardment covers the beach at Lingayen Gulf, Luzon, P.I., 1-9-1945, as we prepare to land.

Tarawa. Rocket ships and destroyers glide swiftly in close to the shore and spew out their missiles of death and destruction. The destroyers are also laying a smoke screen that will mask the movements of our landing crafts (LCIs). We climb down the big nets into the LCIs. Laden with extra supplies, it is a risky and dangerous descent.

Safely aboard, we crouch on the bottom of the LCI as it speeds to join the craft carrying the rest of E Company. It is our first amphibious landing. As we circle, awaiting the signal to head for the beach, my eyes meet those of some of my men: Krug and Ormsby, Iowa farm boys; Steward, part Choctaw Indian; Lowrie, the shoe salesman from Houston; Bookstein, the Jewish boy from Chicago; Polinski, the pudgy Polish boy from St. Louis and a crackerjack softball pitcher; Zappettini, the Italian boy from Stockton; Hung Mark, a Chinese boy from San Francisco; Lund, the mink rancher whose only brother has been killed on Guadalcanal. I have gambled, drank and lived with my men for over three years; we are like a family. I am fully aware they are depending on me to make the right decisions at the right time. This weighs heavily on me as I am not absolutely sure how I will respond when the chips are down. I know I must not display any evidence of the fear and anxiety that gnaws unceasingly at my insides. Fleeting, I worry and feel sorry for Lt. Perry, the Virginian and former Army Engineer. Untrained in the tactics of the infantry, he was assigned to us only two weeks before our departure for Luzon. Damn the Army! It isn't fair to him or to us. I fear he will be a hindrance. There is little talk as we circle, awaiting the signal to go in. I think of my folks and my brothers—one in the Pacific and one in Europe. What a burden on my parents! The bombardment stops and the circles of boats dissolve into a long line that speeds shoreward. No one talks now. Has the enemy survived the bombardment and await us with murderous fire? Are their mortars and artillery waiting far from the beach to pound us with high explosives? Which of us will fall first?

The craft grinds to a halt and down goes the front; waist deep in water we wade shoreward—tense—anxious—fearful. Explosions and the rattle of machine gun fire sends us sprawling on the sand. The fire is not in our area so we are up quickly racing inland. Resistance in our area is light and we are soon moving swiftly down the road lined with cheering Filipinos. We bask in our role of liberators. S-Day ends and we dig in for the night. Our company is unscathed but we know that days of heartbreak, misery, fear and death lie ahead.

Our telephone rings, the green light goes out, I'm soon back to paying bills.

Banzai!

Recently, I watched a TV news story showing several Japanese standing around a banquet table raising their glasses, shouting, "Banzai!" and then sipping their drinks. They repeated this several times. This started the old computer in my head to whirring and I vividly remembered the first time I heard "banzai" shouted by a Japanese. The dictionary defines banzai as a Japanese cheer or battle cry. It was generally thought and accepted by the Yanks fighting in the Pacific that banzai meant, "Blood for the emperor!"

After a breakfast of cold C-rations, our outfit, E Company of the 160th Infantry, begins a long hard day. We launch an attack on the Japanese dug in a narrow promontory in the Storm King Mountains on Luzon in the Philippines. That piece of real estate must be captured before our regiment can advance.

We are in deep trouble shortly after our assault begins. Land mines disable two light tanks that are supposed to lead the attack. An armored bulldozer, used to clear fields of fire, is hit by enemy mortar fire and disabled. We literally claw our way through the heavy growth of trees and underbrush against a well dug-in and tenacious enemy. The fighting is at close range, mostly with grenades and small arms. Our casualty list grows as we capture ground and then give it up.

I fret when I hear that my best buddy has been hit - relieved when I hear his wound is not serious. We gain our objective as night begins to fall. Captain Stilwell orders us to set up a perimeter and dig in. A few days later, I will shed tears when the Captain is killed. He reminds me of my father.

Hurriedly, as weapons platoon sergeant, I oversee placement of our mortars and LMGs (light machine guns) in what I hope are strategic positions. One LMG and two BARs (Browning automatic rifles) are located to cover a broad trail through the trees. It is a likely route for a banzai attack. Sergeant Lowrie and I crouch in the fetal position in a hole we have scratched out under a big log. Soaked with perspiration, dirty and exhausted, we drift in and out of a semi-sleep state - too tired to stay awake and too keyed up to sleep. The possibility of a banzai attack is on everyone's mind. We have all heard the stories of the screaming, charging, fanatical soldiers swinging their gleaming razor-edged Samurai swords.

In the pitch black darkness, I frequently check the dial of my GI watch. I will feel better when the moon comes up as the enemy is not so apt to charge in the bright moonlight. It is ominously quiet as the GIs on the perimeter, with nerves stretched to the breaking point, stare into the inky darkness.

"Banzai-yi-yi! Banzai-yi-yi!" The shrill, hair-raising cries cleave the silence.

They are coming down the trail! Simultaneously, Ormsby, the Iowa farm boy from Osage, fingers the trigger of his LMG and it spews a hail of fire into the charging Japanese and the cries of "banzai!" end with a gurgle as the bullets tear into their bodies. The BAR men open up and rake the trail with deadly fire. The thump of our exploding grenades punctuate the crackle of rifle fire. Some of their grenades and knee mortar shells land inside our perimeter and pieces of shrapnel buzz through the darkness. Their bullets crack overhead and ricochet off the ground scattering dirt and debris.

The charge ends as suddenly as it began and all is quiet except for the moans of their wounded. Luckily we have no casualties but nerves are frayed. Under the bright moonlight, we relax a little and snatch a few winks of sleep. Morning comes and we are relieved by troops of the third battalion. Dog tired, we straggle back to a rest area where we enjoy the luxury of a hot meal and some uninterrupted sleep. Morning comes and we are back at it again - another hill, another attack, more bloodshed, more misery.

Four months later, on Panay, a Jap banzai charge will overrun our perimeter and we will suffer heavy casualties.

I don't know what the Japanese businessmen were celebrating on the TV news story. Perhaps it was the acquisition of the Rockefeller Center by the Mitsubishi Company of Japan. Banzai!



WARBIT – Bodies of enemy dead strew the ground the morning after a banzai attack. The attacks were chilling and nerve-racking but rarely succeeded. Under the tropical sun the bodies almost immediately became havens for myriads of flies which added to our miseries.

Go, And Sin No More

Lahoma Meade and I committed the unpardonable sin for a dog-face the night E Company of the 160th Infantry Regiment took up a position on a hill overlooking Bucari.

Our regiment had made an amphibious landing on the island of Panay and established a beachhead near Iloilo. After some heavy fighting, we broke the Japanese resistance and they took off with us right on their tails. We were hoping to deal them a knockout blow before they could reach the hills. Then, the little devils blew up the bridge over the San Martin River, and before our engineers could throw up a pontoon bridge for our vehicles, they disappeared into the San Juan Hills.

Old "Broad Butt" Colonel Murdray, the battalion commander, ordered us to break off our pursuit and return to Leon. He figured the Japanese would hole up in the hills and after awhile come out and surrender. As usual, he was wrong. The sons of Nippon didn't cooperate, and instead started raiding the Filipino villages and farms, brutalizing the natives and taking their food and animals.

Whenever the colonel got a report of these raids, he would send our company into the hills to search out and destroy the enemy. So, off into the San Juan Hills we'd go, about a hundred strong, knowing damn well we would never catch them because they could see us coming miles away. It was a cat and mouse game and we were the mice.

Anyway, we were on one of those so-called "search and destroy" missions the evening we moved up onto that hill. It had begun to rain and promised to be a miserable night.

"Get the perimeter set up, Sergeant," Captain Stillson barked at me. "I don't think they'll hit us up here tonight, but have everybody dig in and set trip wires. And Sergeant, no fires!"

I walked to where Lahoma was sitting hunkered under his poncho. He was our radio man, so he and I always dug in side by side.

"Better get to diggin', hadn't we, Lahoma?"

"Sarge, I'm not diggin' in. We're inside the perimeter, and besides, those little bastards won't climb this hill in the rain and bother us tonight. We'd be lookin' right down their throats."

"Come on, Lahoma, you know damn well it's an unpardonable sin for an infantryman in combat not to dig in. Captain Stillson would bust my butt if we didn't."

"Sarge, the captain's already in his hole. He won't even know it. We can lie side by side on my poncho and put your poncho over us and be halfway

comfortable. That will be a lot better than lyin' in a hole in the water. Besides, if they hit us we can get down behind that little rise in the ground there."

After eating our cold rations, we sought shelter from the rain, stretched out on the ground with a poncho over us.

"You know what tomorrow is, Sarge?"

"Yes! Another miserable day."

"Tomorrow is Easter Sunday."

"Big deal. You don't believe in that stuff do you, Lahoma?"

"Sure, don't you?"

"I did when I was young, Lahoma, but not anymore. Heck, I used to go to Sunday school and church about every Sunday. I can't believe in a god that allows all the misery, pain and heartaches I've seen in this war."

Lahoma didn't reply. Although wet and miserable, the patter of the rain on the poncho lulled me to sleep.

It was a loud whisper in my ear. "They're coming. Better move."

Simultaneously, Lahoma and I grabbed our rifles, rolled over behind the rise in the ground and flattened out on our stomachs. Then all hell broke loose.

The blood-curdling cries of the banzai charge intermingled with the chatter of machine gun and rifle fire. Blasts of exploding grenades and mortar shells and the cries and moans of the wounded filled the inky darkness. The little Nipponese had climbed the hill in the rain and were hitting us with everything but their rice buckets.

To make a long story short, it was a bad night for us. They broke through our perimeter and the fighting was at close quarters and confusing in the dark. We finally drove them off, but not before we had suffered heavy casualties.

In the early morning light, Lahoma and I crawled back up to where we had started the night.

"For crying out loud, Sarge!" blurted Lahoma. "Look at that!"

A shallow hole strewn with shredded pieces of our ponchos marked the spot where we had lain. A Japanese mortar shell had scored a direct hit on our former resting place.

Sometime later, Lahoma and I sat sipping coffee from our canteen cups. Our eyes met several times, but neither of us offered to speak.

Lahoma finally broke the silence. "Darn good thing you warned me they were coming, Sarge," his voice choked and husky. "I guess you saved both our butts, but tell me, how the heck did you know they were coming?"

I felt the blood rushing to my head and an instant lump in my throat. "For God's sake, Lahoma, I was about to ask you the same thing." My voice quavered uncontrollably. "I thought it was you who warned me."

I looked out across the valley where the sun had risen brilliantly in the clear sky of an Easter Sunday morning.

"Maybe, Lahoma, just maybe, there aren't any unpardonable sins."

Editor's note: The above story is partially fictionalized, based on an actual event.



E COMPANY WARBIT – L to R: Smith, Texas; Thomas, Texas; Steffens, Missouri and Schwartz, Michigan, display samurai swords taken from dead Japs after their platoon had fought off repeated banzai attacks in the Bambam hills on Luzon. Schwartz fought world champion Tony Zale twice for the middleweight championship of the world and lost. He was at ringside when Johnny Miler from Albia, Iowa, defeated Joe Louis. Thomas was awarded a Purple Heart and Smith was killed on Panay.

Number One Ki-ki

About everywhere one turns nowadays there is a food distribution place of some sort. Fast food places - cafeterias - restaurants - supermarkets - 'all you can eat' buffets - you name it. As I see and think of this situation, I often recall two happenings that left an indelible imprint on my mind.

In the summer of 1944, our infantry division relieved the Marines at Cape Gloucester on the island of New Britain in the South Pacific. We secured the airfield on the southwest tip of the island, but thousands of Japanese troops still occupied Rabaul on the northeast tip. Consequently, our company moved by landing barge some twenty-five miles up the coast toward Rabaul, where we set up an outpost.

The nearby natives were friendly and lived in villages of grass huts. They fished, hunted wild cattle that abounded there, and raised some vegetables. One of our daily patrols returned with the information that the word among the natives was that a force of Japanese was moving toward our outpost.



"Number One Ki-ki" patrol on New Britain - author kneeling at far right.

Captain Stilwell immediately sent Lt. Murphy and a nine-man patrol to reconnoiter the situation. Lt. Murphy was injured the first day and returned to camp, leaving me in command of the patrol. Moving over narrow paths through the jungle-like growth was a fantastic experience.

At the first village, we took on three or four natives as guides and carriers. They were keyed to the jungle and pointed out large iguanas (lizards), white cockatoos, huge bats with wingspreads of three feet and other tropical birds that inhabited the branches of the towering trees.

Instead of smoking, the guides chewed betel nut leaves. They would soon get high on the leaves, which turned their saliva and mouths a bright crimson. It was quite a sight when they laughed.

As we moved through the villages, we would check the huts for anything suspicious. We entered one village high in the hills where the natives seemed to be spiritless, listless and unkempt. Perhaps they were ill, or too far from a source of water. With gun ready, I stooped and peered into the gloomy interior of a squalid hut. A few feet from me was an unforgettable sight.

Seated on the only piece of furniture, a bed made of small poles, was an emaciated woman clad only in a loincloth and holding in her arms an equally emaciated baby which nursed at her flat and elongated breast.

She didn't acknowledge my presence in any way, but stared straight ahead with a vacant look in her eyes. As my eyes grew more accustomed to the gloom, I could see lying at her feet, in the thick dust of the dirt floor, a scrawny sow with four or five scrawny piglets tugging at her teats. I don't think the woman was ever aware of my presence.

A tropical downpour motivated us to accept a village chief's invitation to spend the night in their large thatched ceremonial house. There were several men, women and children in the house gathered around an open fire. Hanging on the walls were spears, shields and other paraphernalia.

We shared some of our rations with them and tried to communicate with them, but with little success. Upon learning that I was the leader, the chief insisted I use one of the pole beds. I declined, but accepted when he became angry.

My men kidded me about all the attention I was getting, and exploded with laughter as they speculated that the chief would probably offer me a bed partner. He didn't.

Next morning, I tried to communicate with a personable young boy who proudly showed me a piece of hollow bamboo about 18 inches long and 3 inches in diameter. A mechanism of string and wood was in one end.

I finally figured out that it was a rat trap. When he realized that I knew what it was, his face beamed as he proudly announced, "Noomer one ki-ki."

I wasn't quite ready for that, for I knew that ki-ki meant food in their dialect. After searching for ten days, we found no signs of any Japanese troop movement and returned to our outpost.

This experience, plus having experienced the deprivations of the Great Depression, are probably the reason I stew and fret over the waste, excesses and inequality in the food distribution system today.

If War Comes

On Nov. 11, we observed Veteran's Day. When I was growing up, it was called Armistice Day. The first Armistice Day, Nov. 11, 1918, marked the end of World War I. World War I was often referred to as the "war to end all wars." It was a war in which France, Britain, Germany and the United States suffered more than 16 million casualties. The words "war to end all wars" ring hollow now as, once again, even after the death, destruction and human misery of World War II and the staggering death toll of the Korean and Vietnam tragedies, we are poised on the brink of a cataclysmic bloodbath in the Middle East.

Once more the propaganda of the war makers, politicians and the news media grind out the right words, show the right pictures and trumpet the charges (true or false) that will prepare the people of the United States, referred to by one author as a "nation of sheep," for another possible catastrophic conflagration where the lives of thousands of our men and women will be sacrificed on the altar of the god of war.

Comparatively few people in this country have known and experienced real war. In spite of the fact that some 11 million people were in the armed forces in World War II, only a relatively small number engaged the enemy in face-to-face combat. During World War II it was often quoted that it took ten men to keep one on the front lines. I suspect this was true for the Korean and Vietnam conflict. The rest made up the supply, transport, administration and other support groups.

In no way do I belittle the importance of these groups. There is nothing fair in war. When an infantryman left his foxhole and advanced toward the enemy with nothing between him and the fire and steel of an enemy's sophisticated weapons, he experiences the real war in its most terrifying and brutal aspects.

Having been a combat infantryman in World War II, I become angry when I see, hear and read the words of reporters, politicians, pundits and others who write and speak of war as though it were an upcoming football game. The casual use of the word war has trivialized its true meaning.

Because of this, I offer the following as a substitute for the word war as it would be in the Persian Gulf region: a situation where Americans will be killed instantly; where Americans will be blown to bits and their remains scattered over the desert sands; where Americans will be dismembered, disemboweled, and decapitated by whirring pieces of red-hot steel; where Americans will be incinerated and roasted alive in burning vehicles, tanks, planes and ships; where Americans will tremble from uncontrollable terror

as exploding shells and missiles fill the air with a horrendous noise, fire and shrapnel; where brave Americans will soil themselves and wet their pants as the terrifying noise and carnage of battle engulfs them; where Americans will go mad from the horrifying bloodletting and savagery that surrounds them; where dying Americans will call out in the darkness of their final minutes to parents, wives and sweethearts as their lifeblood slowly soaks into the desert sand; where dying Americans will talk to and bargain with the supreme being of their faith and with their last breath ask, "Why me?"; where the dead will be scattered over the desert in mutilated and horrifying condition and will become blobs of putrifying, maggot-infested flesh in the burning desert; where surviving Americans will carry to their graves the scars of wounds both physical and mental.

Much of what I have just written, I have witnessed and experienced. All of what I have just written can be substantiated in the accounts of World War II by war correspondents and other knowledgeable authors.

If war comes to the Mideast, young people will be getting slaughtered and maimed while their contemporaries at home will be scooping the loop in gas-guzzling, high-powered cars; attending and playing in the big football games; and, in general, enjoying life as usual, making no sacrifice whatsoever.

Few, if any, of the scions of politicians and the wealthy will face death. Those who were recruited into the armed forces to learn a skill, prepare for college and all of the other come-ons did not enlist to die in some Godforsaken place over a barrel of oil and to retain a scandalously wealthy group of monarchs in power. Those who would die would be victims of a flawed and hypocritical foreign policy.

My heart aches for the GIs!



U.S. CEMETERY ON LUZON – Rest o' brave ones. No more to face the shot and shell nor hear the cries of agony from those who fell. Rest in peace! Rest in eternity! Rest!

